Editorial

Karen T. Keifer-Boyd

Social Action through Art: Diversity within Community

One way to look at the 1995-96 proposed social action through art theme is that issues of relevance continually emerge—that is the action itself. Social action as identified in these articles revolved around the issue of diversity. Some identified differences as an abrupt clash or confrontation, others as a negotiation between worlds. All were concerned that we critically examine the values embedded in images—whether in art history textbooks, everyday images surrounding us via entertainment systems, television, film, or computers; or in "fine" art.

Social action through art can stimulate a community of diverse responses. Within the covers of this journal you will find a range of views. We can learn from views that are very different from our own beliefs. You may agree with some studies and bristle as you read others. It is my hope that by reading different, even opposing, views within the same journal that you will engage in dialogue using the Social Theory Caucus newsletter as a vehicle. The address of the editor of the newsletter is on the inside cover of this journal. Dialogue is essential to social action. Without dialogue social action is not social. In this JSTAE volume, Bickley and Wolcott point out that dialogue is also a collaborative venture.
The first group of three articles involve technology and art education. Perhaps newer technologies make diversity more apparent than in the past when local community meant the people, customs, and objects physically surrounding home. Today, home may refer to one's homepage on the World Wide Web. You may seek communities closest to your interests and beliefs while navigating the Internet, but any search introduces numerous alternatives. Television, while still more monolithic than the Internet, provides more choices than I had in my childhood when there were only three channels available. Diversity is a reality. Universals are a myth. Social actions grapple with diversity, some to identify the imbalances, others to develop a place for differences to peacefully co-exist. For Politsky, an emphasis on differences undermines cultural stability and is the impetus for controversial art. For other authors in this volume, differences is necessary to expose disparate meanings for an interwoven richness to the fabric of life. Perhaps, with an awareness of differences there is a greater need for making connections between disparate ways and ideas. If meaning is a matter of difference in the Saussurian sense, as Politsky describes in her article, then difference is also what connects us. Cultural connections could be derived from diversity. Rather than the survival of the fittest in which competition is promoted, survival depends upon diversification in which a community of differences work together, even with contradictory purposes and varied worldviews.

Duncum advocates critical engagement with the numerous digital and electronic images that surround our daily life. He urges that art educators utilize the contextualizing practices of media educators to develop socially critical consciousness. Media educators are concerned with the desires and motivation of audiences, and how they attend to images. For example, multiple exposure, rather than a singular prolonged engagement, characterize the way electronic and digital images are presented and perceived.

Johnson describes the contradictory worlds inhabited by the computer artist. The conventions of computer science and the conventions of art are at odds. The gulf that has separated art and science is about to flood fertile soils into both. While Johnson and Duncum speak of differences having a betwixt and between, Politsky identifies a more abrupt clash of differences.

Politsky uses mythic criticism to interpret the appropriation of ancient religious myths and symbols by contemporary visual and performance artists. Mythic criticism, developed by Jungian theorists, is a psychoanalytic process of identifying culturally constructed archetypal images. According to post-Jungian theory there is a human need to identify and represent shared life patterns, but these patterns are culturally specific. Politsky provides several examples to support her premise that the socio-political postmodern worldview has led some artists to appropriate ancient archetypal rituals and images in order to question adherence to religious practices no longer connected to a communal spiritual orientation. Politsky argues that altering, substituting, or restoring established religious symbols is an attempt to stabilize the seemingly unstable postmodern world.

Social action revealed by the images published in The Gallery are examples of the intention and success in activating community. A brief editorial precedes The Gallery. The Gallery is situated between Politsky's article on a clash between the sacred and profane in art and Gaudelius' and Moore's article on violent images of women; these follow Jagodzinski's article on violence, youth, and media hype. Through a recognition of different worldviews that unsettle the status quo, the middle group of articles bridge technology issues with the final group of four articles which concern gender and art education. The articles in the middle of the journal overlap technology and gender issues but also create their own emphasis by identifying uncompromising differences such as stereotypes and misunderstandings between groups of people. As art educators critically engage in issues of technology and gender in relation to the arts, will they desire a compromise, and if not, what are the alternatives?

In the last group of four articles, one topic that arises in both Bolin's article and Bickley and Wolcott's article concerns H. W. Janson's textbook, The History of Art. Bolin argues that art history survey textbooks have not included women artists in a way that represents their contributions. Bolin explains how
Anthony Janson’s art history survey textbook has marginalized women artists.

True to their belief that collaborative activity among scholars and practitioners in diverse fields could develop more inclusive aesthetic theory and support a broader range of art production, Bickley and Wolcott collaborated on writing their article and included personal communications with women in the arts from the United States, Scandinavia, and Italy. Bickley and Wolcott argue that feminist scholars have changed the discipline of art history and art criticism. The authors advocate a phenomenological critical approach to art in which historical knowledge is based in both male and female experiences of art and artmaking. This approach emphasizes art objects within their physical and social context without attempting to explain or politicize them. Bickley and Wolcott suggest that collaboration between cognitive scientists, anthropologists, psychologists, and art scholars and practitioners may help consolidate the various feminist approaches into a contextually-based and pluralistic theory of art. Bickley and Wolcott advocate the development of theory and practice in art that not only includes the social and political context of artmaking, but also seeks understanding that integrates both male and female phenomenological experiences of art.

The journal concludes with two book reviews. One book reviewer suggests that readers of Warrior for Gringostroika: Essays, Performance Texts, and Poetry by Gómez-Peña (1993) may be moved to action. The other review on Frida's Fiestas, contextualizes art with the substance of life—food—something shared by all in a variety of ways.

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Editorial

Elizabeth Hoffman

Last week I was in a class with twenty-two 4th-graders, discussing how quilts can be like time capsules, linking people and place to a particular time in one’s life. Using the heart-in-hand motif, students traced their hands on cloth, attached cut-out hearts on which they wrote their names and the date and then embellished their (cloth) hands with embroidery. The hands were placed on a larger fabric to create a quilt that will be used as a class portrait. We talked about the heart-in-hand motif, which is prevalent in quilt history. We decided that, basically, the motif means that you discover in your heart what you want to do, then you use your hands to make it happen.

Anxiously awaiting the responses to the theme for this year’s journal—“social action through art”—I envisioned manuscripts from artists, educators, and scholars who were “making it happen.” In reading three of the manuscripts for publication, I discovered that what I thought was a seductive “call for physical action” was interpreted in a much broader sense. The authors’ expansion of the theme coupled with the complexity of issues presented make JSTAE 15/16 an exceptional issue.

I found the emergent topic of negative attitudes toward youth particularly significant. I attended lectures by two powerful, eloquent women this past year—Angela Davis and
Anita Hill. Though speaking divergently on a variety of topics, they both expressed similar concerns about today's youth. Their focus was not aimed at the so-called Generation X, but at the Baby Boomers, who as a group have failed to not only understand youth but allow them their own voice.

Jan Jagodzinski addresses the "youth crisis" by suggesting that the "moral majority" are portraying (through popular culture media) teens in crisis (e.g., teen crime, delinquency, pregnancy, suicide, Satan worship, etc.) to maintain their own hegemony. Specifically, he is concerned that "the issues that surround violence veil broader socio-economic concerns." Jan's ideas caution us to thoroughly investigate the perceived issue before we propose social action. We need to first be aware if we are persuaded to act by the manipulation of popular culture venues (e.g., film, TV, comic books, talk-shows). He reminds us of the power of these media and the need to question the desires of those who hold the power.

Jan also reports on the emergence of "girlie culture" and its German counterpart Emma Töchter. How shall we attend to this fresh, youthful voice in a "postfeminist world"? Images of women are in flux and can be explored through negotiation. Paul Bolin asks us to take action by evaluating classroom materials by examining images and depictions of women in major art history texts such as H. W. Janson's History of Art (with subsequent revisions by Anthony F. Janson). Not only does he question omissions from this text, but he analyzes the language used to describe the work of those women artists who are included.

Yvonne Gaudelius and Juliet Moore carry this discussion into the classroom by encouraging educators to juxtapose images from customary slide reproductions such as The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus with contemporary feminist artists' works that address violence against women. They report the urgent need for the adoption of this type of classroom practice by comparing divergent class responses of students using feminist criticism rather than formalist models. I ponder what would happen if Aeon Flux (MTV) or Tank Girl (comic book/film heroine) met Titian's Rape of Europa on the college slide screen; these are provocative pairings to consider!

Many JSTAE readers are art educators associated with academic institutions. We share ecocritic Cheryll Glotfelty's fear that some "scholarship remains academic in the sense of 'scholarly to the point of being unaware of the outside world' (American Heritage Dictionary)." Pedagogy that promotes social action in the "outside world" is being practiced. For example, recently a week-end seminar titled Power and Place was held on the University of Oregon campus. The planning committee was a collaborative effort: Doug Blandy (Arts and Administration Program), Stan Jones (Landscape Architecture), Fred Tepfer (Campus Planning), Polly Welch (Architecture), and Linda Zimmer (Interior Architecture). As part of the focus on inclusivity and universal design, teams of student identified a space on the University of Oregon campus that they deemed not inclusive, and implemented an intervention/installation that addressed the workshop focus. Through artistic expression, students portrayed concepts including gender differences in relation to power, metaphors for barriers, perceptions of individual differences, self-definition, sensory perception, sites for multiple identity, and play. Evaluations by participants were overwhelmingly positive. This type of experiential learning challenges us to consider other configurations of this year's JSTAE theme (e.g., art through social action).

Finally, I congratulate all of the authors and especially Karen for a job well done. One always receives more than one gives when working on a project of this type. I look forward to continued discussion at our next caucus.

Notes


2. Contact Doug Blandy at the University of Oregon in Eugene, OR for more information about this unique seminar.
Art Education and Technology: These are the Days of Miracles and Wonder

Paul Duncum

Abstract

This paper examines the impact on human consciousness of the exponential proliferation of electronic images, and offers suggestions concerning how educators should respond. A postmodern critique includes the ideas of an inverted Kantian aesthetics which embraces the everyday, a dramatic compression of space and time, and personal disorientation. A further critique grounds these views of consciousness in new economic arrangements and the rapaciousness of capitalism. I argue that the only viable educational response to this new consciousness is a critical examination of mass media imagery. Basic components of media education in schools are signposts of an appropriate response.

The secondary title of this paper is adapted from a line in the Paul Simon song, "The Boy in the Bubble," which appears on the Graceland disc of 1986. The song is about contrasts; between the distant and the immediate, illusion and reality, terror and the wonder of new technology. His images are kaleidoscopic, seemingly random, certainly fragmented. Babies are bombed, and we follow the action on television in slow motion, medical science has seemingly magical powers, and with "lasers in the jungle," even the wilderness is colonised by technology. Everywhere there are "staccato signals of constant information."

Paul Simon sings:

These are the days of miracles and wonder

And don't cry baby, don't cry

In other words: as surprising as it might seem, this is our condition and there is no point in being distraught. The lyrics are a fitting focus for this paper.

I will begin with a sketch of the proliferation of images that has resulted from the new and emerging technologies. This sketch is followed by an examination of the effects on consciousness which some postmodern critics claim is due to the proliferation of images. This analysis is, in turn, grounded in an argument about capitalist circulation that suggests the proliferation of imagery is likely to continue. Finally, I will argue that educators are able to intervene to create a critical consciousness, and I will offer suggestions drawn from media studies on how to proceed.
The Empire of the Image

The late 20th century is characterised by the image (Jenks, 1995). As Baudrillard (1987) said in a lecture delivered in 1983, images are multiplying in an irresistible epidemic process which no one today can control. He argued that the world has become infinite or rather exponential in terms of imagery and is caught up in a mad pursuit of images (p. 29). Similarly, Guinness (1994) writes of “the humiliation of the word” and “the triumph of the image” (pp. 94-95).

Presently, for example, the dominance of television as a cultural form is under challenge from more recent technologies. By 1996 there will be 45 million CD ROM players in the world (Australian Commonwealth Government, 1994, p. 56). This technology allows for an exponential number of images stored and retrieved. But already CD is seen as a hinge technology, a turning point between print media and the Internet, which is likely to be superseded by the year 2000. Already millions of people, including students, are surfing on the Internet, riding the waves of information. It is possible to gain access from one’s home to thousands to international databases which contain millions of images. From January 1994 until October 1994 world traffic on the World Wide Web doubled every 11 weeks, and in Australia, from September 1994 to February 1995, traffic doubled every five to six weeks (O’Callaghan, 1995). While such exponential growth cannot be sustained, it is impossible to predict when usage will begin to taper off.

Interactive multi-media will become the basis of an economy based on the exchange not of goods but of information. It is already changing “the way we communicate, the way we learn, the way we access information, the way we create, the way we live our daily lives” (Australian Commonwealth Government, 1994, p. 57). For example, with readily available, inexpensive software, school students are already “morphing” images, that is, turning one image into another. Numerous other computer programs exist for altering images, and the creation of entirely new images is now commonplace (Ritchin, 1990). Meanwhile, statistics on television viewing in North America (Gannaway, 1994) and Great Britain (Morley, 1995) suggest that all social groups watched at least three to four hours a day. For many people, switching on the television is synonymous with being at home, so that “television belongs to the everyday, to the normal backdrop of expectations and mundane pleasures” (Ellis, cited in Morley, 1995, p. 172).

The Aesthetics of the Everyday

Some critics maintain that the proliferation of imagery have given rise to a new aesthetic, a postmodern aesthetic of the everyday (Baudrillard, 1988; Featherstone, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991). McRobbie (1994) argues that the “single, richly coded image” gives way to one’s experience of a busy everyday life where “a slow, even languid” examination is “out of tempo with the times” (p. 13). The aesthetics of the everyday “deflect attention away from the singular scrutinising gaze . . . and asks that this be replaced by a multiplicity of fragmented, and frequently interrupted “looks” (p. 13). The paradigm is not concerned with an artwork in a gallery, but involves theme parks, shopping malls, streetscapes (Gottdiener, 1995), glossy magazines, pinball alleys, television, and computer interfaces.

McRobbie sees opportunities in this shift of focus, and later in this paper I will show how art educators can begin to respond positively. However, the critique of postmodern, everyday aesthetics has been mostly framed in pessimistic terms. Where McRobbie sees a “textural thickness and visual density” (p. 20) in everyday life, pessimists like Baudrillard (1987) and Jameson (1991) see surface appearance and meaninglessness. Where some see television as a mundane pleasure that is under the control of the viewer, pessimists see a disorientating plethora of images and a lack of discrimination on the part of audiences.

One way of understanding the aesthetics of the everyday is to consider it as an inversion or switching about of Kantian aesthetics (Featherstone, 1991). Kant conceived aesthetic experience mostly in terms of disinterestedness, but also interestedness to the extent that one took serious note (Mundt, 1959). The aesthetics of the everyday stresses Kant’s interestedness and excludes his disinterestedness. The new
aesthetics involves participation, sensuousness and desire (Featherstone, 1991). It stresses interestedness, it represents the triumph of the popular, and includes the celebration of the ephemeral and trivial.

Kantian aesthetics involves both the beautiful and the sublime, and the aesthetics of the everyday reflects Kant’s notion of the sublime. Yet the Kantian sublime and the new sublime are very different. For Kant, the sublime was found in raging oceans and boundless skies. It involved a sense of separation from the world. In discovering this separation, this distance, one also discovers a sense of autonomy from one’s surroundings and experiences one’s freedom from the world. The sublime is “an experience of what overwhelms us, of what cannot be taken in - and, nearly simultaneously, of our ability nonetheless to rise or stand above such things” (Melville & Reading, 1995, p. 13). It is linked “to the human ability to recognise something as ‘too big’; the capacity to make excess count and not simply exceed” (p. 13).

On the other hand, the postmodern aesthetic of the everyday is to be found not in nature but in the humanmade environment, in flashing neon lights, discordant sounds, and continual, hurried, and abrupt movement. According to pessimistic critics like Baudrillard (1987, 1988) and Jameson (1991), the aesthetics of the everyday represents excess which does exceed and which counts for nothing. It overwhelms us but is not an experience one can easily “rise or stand above.” Recognising that it is “too big,” we succumb to it. There can be neither a sense of separation from the experience nor any actual autonomy. Rather, we are surrounded by the experience; it flows about us, immersing us. Instead of depth, there is surface. Instead of imagery referring to reality images are now so seamless, so seemingly all-encompassing, that according to Baudrillard (1988), reality and its images have imploded. Virtual reality is seen as a technological expression of this implosion. Meaning is reduced to endless symbolic exchanges which are entirely self-referential. As Porter (1993) explains, “...a sexy woman is used to sell a car; a car sells cigarettes; cigarettes sell machismo; machismo is used to sell jeans; and so the symbolic magic circle is sealed” (p. 2).

Thus, sex, youth, health, speed, power, and so on all transvalue and interpenetrate in a mesmerising dreamworld of floating signifiers. Nothing seems anchored. The images are so prolific that we become overloaded and desensitised. The “staccato signals of constant information” are so meaningless that we have become hermetically sealed from reality. For example, in “The Evil Demon of Images” Baudrillard (1987) claims that the Vietnam war never took place because for most people it was just a show on television. The boy in the bubble is a wonder, but such insulation carries a price.

For Baudrillard (1987) it is no longer possible to maintain a distinction between truth and representation. He calls television “telefission” and writes of it as

not merely of an exponential linear unfolding of images and messages but ... an exponential enfolding of the medium around itself. This fatality lies in this endless enwrapping of images (literally: without end, without destination) which leaves no other destiny than images.

(p. 30)

While the technologies of communication are more evident than ever, communication has died, and paradoxically, it has died precisely because it is so prevalent. Baudrillard likens communication today to a close up in a pornographic film which is so intimate with detail and so lacking in context that its erotic purpose is voided. In the same way, the technologies of communication are evident everywhere and information is offered about innumerable topics, but the information is so fragmented and disconnected, that context and meaning disperse.

Similarly, Jameson (1991) views depthlessness as the single most important formal feature of postmodern cultural production. Perpetual change has already led to the disappearance of a sense of the real. Cultural production is characterised by blank parody and consciousness by schizophrenia. Unlike parody, where some norm exists that can be burlesqued, blank parody is about nothing but other forms of cultural production. A schizophrenic consciousness, is pervasive.
where the normal signifiers of temporal existence, a past, a present, and a future, have broken down and are reduced to perpetual present events untainted by the past or thought for the future. The signifiers which once made communication possible have been destroyed. In place of the Kantian sublime, Jameson sees only hysteria, or the “hysterical sublime” (Bertens, 1995).

Capitalist Circulation

Jameson (1991) suggests that the proliferation of imagery will continue. Jameson and other neo-Marxists (Harvey, 1989; Hall, & Jacques, 1991) ground their description of the postmodern condition in the economic arrangements which characterise our time. They cite Marx’s prophesy that capital would become ever more rapacious, ever more pervasive, and in the process continuously revolutionise social structures and human relationships (Harvey, 1989; Hebdige, 1991; Jameson, 1991; Murray, 1991). The greatly increased production and consumption of images is paralleled in an intense acceleration in many sectors of production, exchange and consumption. New systems of communication and information flow make it possible to circulate commodities through the marketplace with ever greater speed. To manage the pace of change, and often to force it, financial services and markets have speeded up to the extent that 24 hours on the global stock markets is now a long time.

The mobilisation of fashion in mass markets now ensures that consumption is fast-paced. To drive the ever greater turnover in production and consumption there is the need for ever more marketing, which in turn means more and more imagery. Many observers note (e.g., Gannaway, 1994; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991) that television is a product of late capitalism which promotes the culture of consumption. Television mobilises needs and wants, desires and fantasies, as part of the urge to sustain sufficient buoyancy of demand in consumer markets and thus keep capitalist production profitable. The proliferation of imagery through television has merely kept pace with the acceleration of production and consumption of products and services.

Advertising is the most obvious form of imagery designed for fast track consumption. In mobilising desire for money, sex, status, and fashion, advertising promotes consumption, and thus promotes the foundation value upon which capitalism depends. The alleged virtues of instantaneity and disposability have become the particular foci of the message of consumption so eloquently put by one of Barbara Kruger’s images, “I shop, therefore I am” (see Gannaway, 1994).

The kaleidoscope of television imagery, however elevated or educational, is mobilised to ensure the smooth operations of an economy which depends upon an ever increasing growth in consumption, including an increased imagery production and consumption. And the turnover of imagery is now very fast indeed (Harvey, 1989). For Jameson (1991), the global spread of capital means that all progressive movements have been appropriated. The demand for ever more production and consumption destroys everything once considered authentic and oppositional. For Baudrillard (1988), people are merely sponges, a manipulated and apathetic mass.

Some educators have echoed Baudrillard’s and Jameson’s condemnation of postmodern times. From both the political left and right, educators have identified a serious decline in rational thought as a consequence of a visual culture (Holbrook, 1994; Gannaway, 1994; Guinness, 1994). In particular, literacy educators link an alleged decline in rational thought with the decline of a literate culture. Their particular target is television.

Negotiating the New Aesthetics

However, what this critique ignores is that popular aesthetics has an ancestry (Schroeder, 1980) which predates Kant, for example, by a long time. The critique relies on an historical perspective in which the aesthetics of the everyday marks a cultural decline. But the argument is ahistorical since the popular has always embraced the spectacular, the ephemeral, and the trivial.
Baudrillard's critique of the impact of imagery merely represents the last in a long line of critiques that condemns popular culture and its users (Duncum, 1994). The tendency to see present conditions as a fall from previous times, or as a loss of innocence, is age-old, and has had its nostalgic expressions in the notion of a biblical Eden, a golden age, or an organic society. Previously, the targets have been the popular press, comics, and popular magazines. The present attack on television use, theme parks, shopping malls, the Internet and so on, represents only the latest rerun of familiar themes. Unwittingly, such critiques betray continuities with high modernism.

Baudrillard's (1987, 1988) revulsion at postmodern experience and his attack on ordinary people as sponges merely echoes his intellectual predecessor Nietzsche who wrote of ordinary human beings as the "bungled and botched" (cited in Russell, 1961 p. 729). Finding no revolutionary zeal among the working class or contemporary fine artist, the critics of the new technologies ignore the numerous progressive movements that now demand attention, the voices of women, gays, blacks, the Third World, and so on (Bertens, 1995; McRobbie, 1994).

Selective examples and forced distinctions are hallmarks of these critiques (Duncum, 1990). Some postmodernisms are practically synonymous with hyperbole and of totalising from the particular (Bertens, 1995). For example, many cultural observers speak of postmodern times as if time and space have imploded or have been annihilated (Baudrillard, 1987, 1988; Jameson, 1991). Harvey (1989) argues, with less rhetoric and more analysis, that what we are experiencing is not an implosion or annihilation of time and space but rather their sudden, dramatic compression. He argues that since the 1960s there has been a rapid contraction of space and time that, while new in its intensity, is part of a long historical process. Thus the current preoccupation with the compression of space and time is merely the latest compression. It seems like an implosion or annihilation because we are simply not psychologically equipped to handle it. We do not possess the perceptual habits required of the new technologies. Since the fundamental parameters of our existence appear to have dissolved or imploded, we experience dislocation and disorientation.

However, it is useful to consider that a sense of disorientation, dislocation and meaninglessness is characteristic of paradigm shifts in cultural life (Abbs, 1995). Many cultural critics expressed the same kind of confusion and despair over characteristically Modernist developments as critics express today over Postmodern thought. This suggests that a postmodern consciousness is neither better nor worse than the habitual, modernist ways of thinking used by most mature adults today. It suggests that a postmodern consciousness is simply different. Perhaps a proliferation of electronic imagery is leading—if it has not already done so for most young people—not to deficient modes of thought, but to altered modes of cognition.

Some critics have observed that the age of the image marks a sea change no less momentous than the invention of writing or the printing press (Gannaway, 1994; Spender, 1994). But not everyone welcomed these technological innovations. Socrates argued that human thought and communication were fluid, dynamic, and that understanding was based on constant interchange between people which writing denied. Writing, he argued, forced you to follow an argument rather than engage in one (Spender, 1994). His paradigms were conversation and the oral tradition. Another paradigm became dominant, and for more than two millennia the principal media for communication have been the book and the still image. Significantly, the new technologies are likened to oracy rather than literacy (Spender, 1994).

Such scenarios may alarm those of us who feel comfortable with less ephemeral images and text. To literacy educators they suggest, as Holbrook (1994) says, that "consciousness itself has become corrupted" (p. 21). But to young people these are the ordinary conditions of their lives. These conditions are not currents to be railed against, but the realities of their social world, the material from which they make meaning. We need to view students as free-floating agents who fashion narratives, images, objects and practices from the multitudinous bits and pieces of prior cultural productions (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). On this reading, postmodern times do not necessarily herald the deterioration of cognition or communication. Rather, we are the participants, not the victims,
of a paradigm shift, not only from modern to postmodern times, but from those forms of communication that have prevailed for millennia, the book and the still image. The death of communication itself, as prophesied by Baudrillard and Jameson for example, seems greatly exaggerated.

Perhaps some theorists are already adjusting to these new realities (Bertens, 1995). Woolley (1992), for example, argues that virtual reality, far from eroding a sense of the real only reinforces what is veridical. Already, we seem to have made adjustments to the proliferation of images. Morley (1995) argues that while research statistics on television watching are impressive, the notion of watching television is problematic. Viewing a program with specific and prolonged attention is confined to only nuclear, middle class, and higher educated households. Most people have the television on as a background accompaniment to social life, to playing, cooking, working, and even engaging in conversation. It should be recalled that when television was introduced, the doomsayers predicted that television would destroy the common culture and threaten the family unit, but now as the information highway looms, television is seen as the major factor in promoting a common culture (Glued to the Telly, 1995). The information highway will undoubtedly change social life significantly, but the likelihood is that with its eventual passing, doomsayers will point to it as the basis of their threatened social cohesion.

Education and the New Technologies

Educators have often denied both the complexity and challenge of the new technologies, and have offered standards which were established in a pre-electronic age of imagery. For language educators the threat is seen as the production of knowledge through imagery rather than the written word (e.g., Gannonay, 1994; Holbrook, 1994; Guinness; Giroux, 1994). Some acknowledge the need to address imagery; others seek to reestablish a literate culture. Some art educators also seek to reinvent the past. Greer's (1984) formulation of Discipline-based Art Education (DBAE), Smith's (1994) advocacy of excellence in art education, and ABOs (1995) continuing espousal of the intrinsic value of the high arts is a retreat into a ghetto approach to the visual arts (Duncum, 1993). Here one is blind to the plurality of practices from which most people derive meaning in ordinary, everyday life. It is a closed off, defensive, even reactionary, minority view of visual culture which is restricted to modernity. It continues to celebrate high art rather than seriously engage with the plurality of imagery practices through which most people live their daily lives. Their approach is as futile as the calls from some literacy educators to return to a culture based on books.

Instead we should engage students' needs by acknowledging the significance of the new technologies and devising curricula in partnership with students' use of them. Freedman (1995) claims that "Television has become the national curriculum," and she argues that schools are one of the few places where students can try to make sense, face to face with others, of their exposure to the media. She argues that media experiences are largely monological, insofar as engagement is limited to offering a response. The great advantage of schools is that they allow opportunities for generating meaning, including critical critique, through dialogue. Schools offer one of the few dialogical environments in which students can try to make sense of their many monological experiences.

The discipline of media education offers a number of pointers for art educators who wish to explore the new and emerging technologies in a socially critical way. This is not surprising since media education has sought to develop social awareness of mass media products (e.g., Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994; Lusted, 1991; Materson, 1990). Media education has always been focused on electronic media, especially television. While not insensitive to sensory delight, its primary focus has been with meaning. It has never been burdened with a high culture view; instead, it has adopted a socially levelled, semiotic view of culture. It informs students that cultural products offer selective representations that serve the interests of their makers. Instead of concentrating almost exclusively on the visual, media education has dealt with images in the context of written and spoken text. Socially critical theory, with issues of race, gender, and class, has been the dominant force within
media studies. Media education has also adopted a far more economically and politically grounded view of social context than has art education.

Broad comparisons with media education and art education inform us of what is missing in art education. Since the impact of DBAE, art education has sought the meaning of art objects by studying them through historical accounts of their significance, and the theory and practice of art criticism. But typically, the professional role models for these activities—art historians, art critics, and art theorists—do not make the kind of specific connections between cultural products and economic or political pressures that media educators do. Among the disciplines of art history, art criticism and art theory, only very general social conditions are taken into account. Consequently, art education largely exists without extensive considerations of political or economic pressures. This is at once apparent when we examine the components of media education.

Media study involves the production and criticism of media products in similar ways to the production and criticism of art objects in art education. But it also involves two components that are totally lacking from art education: a study of audiences and a study of cultural production as an industry. Some art theorists would deny that the production of art is an industry, seeing it primarily as an individualistic expression. Equally, since the fine art world largely operates within a highly specialised market, there is no tradition of research on audience response to particular cultural products. The interpretation of meaning is left to professional critics, curators and historians. The tradition of grounding the multilayered meanings of a cultural product in the multitudinous interpretations of a mass audience, is completely absent from the disciplines of fine art, but is an inherent part of mass media operations and its study. Similarly, the custodians of fine art, through the rarefaction of personal expression and individual taste, deny an understanding of cultural production as an industrial operation. Yet mass production and distribution is fundamental to mass media and its study.

In media studies it is common to undertake audience survey research, even involving primary aged children. Audience research surveys set out to determine, for example, the target audience for a cultural product, the range of pleasures that an audience derives from the product, what values that an audience brings to a cultural product, and what range of meanings that they take from a product. Differences are usually examined in terms of gender, age, class, or ethnic background. Often, where the target audience consist of students, debates about the values of a product are fine tuned, differentiating, for example, between a television program for an audience of 13 or 14 year olds as opposed to 15 or 16 year olds (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). By conducting their own survey research and by debating among themselves, students learn that audiences hold complex, and often deeply ambiguous values, which make them both prone to and resistant to the influence of the media.

When cultural production is studied as an industrial process, students learn about the collective nature of cultural creation and dissemination, the legislative framework to which cultural producers must conform, and the constraints imposed by financial investors and advertisers. Students learn that media products are the outcome of complex and ever shifting interactions between audience, technology, social pressure groups, legal requirements, and a balance sheet between financial commitment and return. Thus, students are provided with a far more complex picture of how cultural production operates than is usual in art education. The difference can be summed up in one word: context. Media education sets out to provide students with a greater context than art education. This is a crucial difference since it is a lack of context for cultural production that so worries critics like Baudrillard and Jameson. Their concern over the proliferation of images is not really about the number of images, although it is often presented as such, but concerns the lack of context for understanding images. They are troubled that it is only other images which give context to images and that understanding is not grounded in other considerations. Education can provide a broad social context, and it is our responsibility as educators to provide the opportunity for students to acquire contexts for the pleasures they seek through the new and emerging technologies.
Critique and resistance are still possible, despite Baudrillard, Jameson, and others, since the distinction between partial truths and illusion remains an ongoing negotiation (Buckingham & Sefton-Green, 1994). Critique is still possible, as Baudrillard's and Jameson's work itself demonstrates (Bertens, 1995). And it is still possible to resist dominant meanings and to forge new progressive movements as evidenced by the numerous, once marginal, voices. A socially critical education would draw upon student's negotiations and resistances to cultural products, make them explicit, and promote opportunities to develop a critical consciousness.

Conclusion

We are undoubtedly living in days of miracles and wonder, but “don’t cry baby,” since a defensive position is totally inadequate to the challenges we face. Keeping abreast of developments is necessary, but it is only through an active, critical engagement with the wonders and miracles of our time that we can hope to engage with the future.

References


Portrayal of the Computer Artist: Between Worlds

Mia Johnson

Abstract

As a result of ignorance and misconceptions about the nature of computer artwork, the artist is misunderstood by practitioners in fine art, art education, science, and industry. This paper enters the world of the computer artist to look at some of the factors which contribute to misperceptions. It examines social issues ranging from the design and use of hardware and software to access issues, and problems with concrete and electronic exhibition venues. It also describes communication barriers in education and the media.

Computers and software for art and design are relatively new art media. From the earliest line-art plotter drawings to recent 3D graphics (so-called because the objects in the picture are constructed in three dimensions and placed in "virtual" environments), the artistic history of computer graphics encompasses little more than thirty years. On one hand, it is astonishing that a medium could evolve so quickly. On the other, it is astonishing that we know almost nothing about a medium that is probably, after photography, the second most pervasive medium in contemporary image-making. We are impacted on a daily basis by imagery created or manipulated by computer hardware and software, yet few people can read its conventions or interpret the way computer art is situated within a postmodern context.

As a result of ignorance about computer art in the fields of science, industry, education, the media, and the fine art world, there are many misconceptions about the computer artist. The artist is perceived as rudderless and non-traditional by practitioners in science and industry. Members of the traditional art world of galleries and museums, as well as many in the field of art education, perceive the computer artist as scientific and thereby non-traditional in an art sense. Pomeroy (1991) provided a cogent description of the dilemma by contrasting the perspectives of corporations and the scientific community with those of traditional art worlds (see Table 1).

He notes that the scientific community perceives the artist skeptically as a bohemian or "egghead" intellectual. The traditional art community, with its generalized fear of technology that is quite particularized in the case of computers, perceives the computer artist as threatening. Neither group views computer art as something "timeless," grounded in traditions, or "pure." One group considers computer art as somewhat slipshod, the other as "too slick."

This paper enters the world of the computer artist in order to analyze some of the grounds on which these perceptions are
Analysis of Pomeroy's Perceptions of the Computer Artist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporations/Science</th>
<th>Art Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bohemian</td>
<td>Threat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egghead intellectual</td>
<td>Violation of sacred craft &amp; media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic court jester</td>
<td>Intruder from an alien realm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skepticism</td>
<td>Technophobia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Not creating "timeless art"
- Tool-driven
- Fast on feet
- Creative, interpretive
- Imaginative, selective
- Often makeshift
- Not slick or salon-oriented

It will examine some of the conventions and constraints under which computer artists operate. It will also delineate issues with which computer artists are currently grappling while constructing a new art world.

### Entering the Computer Art World

One of the greatest challenges a computer artist faces is access to equipment, since there is no way of working without it. Unless the artist is affiliated with an institution or workplace which owns artistic software, private start-up costs will resemble those of a small business. At the very least, the computer artist needs a computer, monitor, and keyboard plus one or more programs, for a baseline total of at least $3000. Fortunately, along with the advent of more powerful and less expensive home computers during the past five years, dozens of new low cost computer programs for art and design are now available. However, even the more expensive graphic software for personal use is still at the low-end of the industrial technological field. For example, a commercially available program for 3D graphics like * Autodesk 3D Studio* costs about $9000, while a high-end industry program like *Wavefront* or *Alias* is currently about $80,000. An additional access problem is that cultural integration of industry developments in technology can take many years, due to initial security restrictions and the high cost of prototypes. Also, new technology is generally first released publicly in such forms as video games and "power gloves" and may not be readily adaptable to art purposes.

Computer artists acknowledge the difficulty of access to technology with certain conventions. A painter may perceived Grumbacher paint as merely "oil paint" to be used in any manner. However, the computer artist and artwork remain closely affiliated with the production companies and support industry of the trade. Table 2 provides an overview model of a computer art world, from the production base level through the user support level to the output and exhibition levels.

Computer artwork is commonly identified by the names of programs, hardware, institutions, or corporations. The very act of making computer art requires collaboration between artists and technology professionals such as software engineers or interface designers. Even when artists do not collaborate directly through sponsorship, they collaborate indirectly with the programmers and engineers, whose "authorship" is embedded in both its constraints and possibilities. Acknowledgments accompanying published or exhibited computer artwork almost always credit the hardware (e.g., *Silicon Graphics IRIS 4D*) and software (e.g., *Alias 3.3* or *Xaos* proprietary—proprietary means that the developers have not yet released the program to the general public). Because different software programs offer different capabilities for performing artistic or technological tasks, artists often put together their own package of programs. Thus hardware or software credits may be broken down into:
Table 2

Model of a Computer Art World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardware designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interface designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User support level 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical institutes, art schools, universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistants, graphics support, advisors, consultants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program manuals, on-line help, program help lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User groups, listservs, newsgroups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade shows, conferences, demonstrations, vendors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate sponsorship, in-house workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical assistance, facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printers, audio-visual labs, tech shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process labs, editors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concrete: Traditional galleries, trade fairs, conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic: FTP sites on the Internet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this way, an image from the art world of computer artists leaves behind the creative equivalent of a paper trail. This makes it a highly visible art world in ways that traditional art worlds, such as those of painters or weavers, are not. However, due to these conventions members of traditional art worlds perceive the computer artist as making artistic, stylistic, and political concessions. A legacy of poor working conditions and low economic standards for traditional artists has perpetuated a suspicion of those who accept patronage, commissions, or commercial work. Artists may be suspected of "selling out" or of not being a "real" artist. The computer artist, by crediting sponsors and technology, in turn is affected by this legacy carried over from traditional art worlds. On the other hand, affiliations and credits do give the work some veracity and authority in the corporate and scientific world. But if the artist "hacks," "customizes," or "tweaks" the hardware or software according to creative needs, then the scientific community also will view the artist with suspicion. For credibility, the computer artist is tied to certain procedural behaviors in the scientific community.

Inside the Computer Art World

What do things look like from the artist's perspective? Assuming that the artist has gained access to some kind of hardware and software that will suit the artist's creative interest, the artist must become educated about the present state of this...
specific technology and transcend its present state to create an original work.

Computer art education can take many forms. As outlined in the user support level in Table 2, education may be formal or informal. Formal coursework may be available through institutions or in seminars sponsored by base level developers to promote their products. Trade shows and conferences offer the artist informal opportunities to try new products. User groups on the Internet are an extremely popular means of problem-solving. For example, an artist using a specialized program like Autodesk 3D Studio may join a user group organized by other users of the same software to discuss technical and artistic problems and solutions. One request for advice on a problem may bring dozens of suggestions from users all over the world. Program manuals and on-line help from program developers are also important educational sources for self-teaching.

The computer artist must quickly come to terms with the technology of the medium and at the same time explore its aesthetic potential. It is always impossible to separate "art" from the technology used in its creation, and computer art is no exception. Garofalo (1991) points out that, from the first cave drawings, art has been intimately connected to increasingly complex technologies. As the computer artist learns the technical aspects of programs, the artist identifies the aesthetic features and possibilities of the medium (as opposed to its number-crunching or spreadsheet capabilities—although these too have been grist for the creative mill).

Computer art is sometimes valued for utilizing the potentials of the computer. "In SIGGRAPH 91, the premier convention and showcase for computer artists internationally, the design jury focused on pieces where the computer played a part in the "look," style, or production of a piece" (Kerlow cited in Johnson, 1996). On the other hand, computer graphics are often criticized by traditional artists and educators for looking like they were made by a computer. This is like criticizing ceramics for looking like they are made of clay.

Whether well-received or not, graphic procedures such as mirroring (the flipping of an image to make a mirrored duplicate) or recursion (the repetition of a form in increasingly smaller or larger as well as more or less detailed ways) may be seen as computer art conventions. At the same time that the artist "learns" the program, the artist learns the conventions of the medium. As Becker (1982) stated, "When the equipment embodies the conventions, the way a conventional thirty-five-millimeter camera embodies the conventions of contemporary photography, you learn the conventions as you learn to work the machinery" (p. 57). Rosenblum (1978) wrote about the role of conventions in photography in a similar manner:

Conventions specifying what a good photograph should look like embody not only an aesthetic more or less accepted among the people involved in the making of art photographs, but also the constraints built into the standardized equipment and materials made by major manufacturers. (Rosenblum, 1978, p. xx)

Conventions also apply to computers and computer graphics. For example, the scale of artwork is affected by conventions. Many computer artists think and work in a magazine-sized scale which is consistent with the monitor image size. The printer or "output" size may also determine the artwork's dimensions.

In his seminal text, Art Worlds, the sociologist Howard Becker (1982) defined the conventions of art worlds in some detail. He maintained that conventions dictate the materials that artist use. As previously mentioned, computer artists are concerned with the degree to which the computer itself is visible and invisible in the artwork. Computer art was originally created by programming code (i.e., based in mathematical instructions to the computer), and frequently looked programmed. Until recently, many computer artists continued to push the limits of "pure" computer graphics (i.e., art made only with hardware and software and displayed on a monitor). But in the art exhibit of SIGGRAPH 95 in Los Angeles, the integration of computer art with traditional media such as watercolor and hand-made rag papers was more prominent. According to Becker (1982),
"conventions dictate the abstractions to be used to convey particular ideas or experiences, as when painters use the laws of perspective to convey the illusion of three dimensions" (p. 29). Some computer graphic artists stretch traditional art conventions. Working with 3D programs, they may, for example, decrease the field of view to increase the effects of perspective.

Computer graphics are full of symbolic, insider language which is often playful or tongue-in-cheek. Imagery such as a teapot or a lunar landscape, for example, provoke immediate identifications among computer practitioners, who were sometimes required to create these images as exercises during formal training.

After mastering the techniques of a program and learning the conventions, many computer artists strive to transcend the program and use it in original ways. An artist must understand the boundaries to go beyond the current forms and concepts in art. Georges Braque wrote: "In art, progress does not consist in extension, but in the knowledge of limits. Limitation of means determines style, engenders new form, and gives impulse to creation" (cited in Chipp, 1968, p. 260). In this respect, the computer artist has an advantage over peers working in traditional media. That is, individual computer programs generally operate dependably and consistently. For Becker, "the obverse of the constraint is the standardization and dependability of mass-produced materials . . . a roll of Kodak Tri-X film purchased anywhere in the world has approximately the same characteristics and will produce the same results as any other roll" (p. 33). Becker could have made the same argument for computer software. This kind of dependability is valuable. Computer artists may also take more creative chances with their work than their traditional peers, since earlier versions can be saved and recalled if subsequent experiments prove unfruitful.

Computer artists are motivated to engender new forms for at least three reasons. First, innovation is highly prized in the world of computer art. For example, the jurors for SIGGRAPH 91 selected works that were particularly innovative, in terms of being unlike works previously exhibited. The computer artist, therefore, is under pressure to push the medium in unexpected directions, which, as discussed earlier, evokes certain perceptions of the artist among those in industry. Second, the predictability of specific computer programs may provoke the artist to transcend their conventions. Becker wrote, "Because equipment comes to embody one set of conventions in such a coercive way, artists frequently exercise their creativity by trying to make equipment and materials do things their makers never intended" (p. 58). A third reason for the rapid development and changing appearance of computer art is the accelerated development of computer technologies in the past ten years. Today, the continual introduction of new products and upgrades makes it impossible for individuals to learn them all. Conversely, this flood of technology—which particularly affects those artists who are inspired by the medium itself—creates the impression in traditional art worlds that the computer artist may be "flighty" or "tool-driven."

After grappling with numerous variables that include mastering technical knowledge, learning creative techniques, and acquiring an awareness of the unique conventions of the media, the computer artist must consider issues that have received little critical attention from art historians, theorists, or aestheticians. The most important issues involve the chameleon-like nature of computer art. As Malina (1990) notes, computer art is situated within the larger context of the study and development of artificial life. "The unique computer tools available to the artists, such as those of image-processing, visualization, simulation, and network communication are tools for changing, moving, and transforming, not for fixing" (Malina, 1990, p. 33). These characteristics are conceptual as well as technological, and are typical of the postmodern paradigm within which computer art is situated. Modern art has focused on the visual appearance of static artworks. Modern science has sought to identify, characterize, and categorize. But both modernism in art and positivism in science are currently confronted with an interpretive, pluralistic aesthetic. Beyond the technological aspects, computer art involves a melt-down of art, culture, politics, science, text, and images.

Computer artists also engage in issues ranging from appropriation and ownership to cultural colonization. Because
40  Johnson

counter graphics are more truthfully presented in their original digital form than as analog print-outs or hardcopy, many artists exhibit their work on-line at electronic sites via File Transfer Protocols (FTP). Therefore, anyone with access to the Internet can view their work and usually download a copy from these sites. Unlike analog, "real-world" paintings, images appropriated in this way also contain the digital code that constructs them. An artist who downloads an image possesses the entire artwork including its binary code. Imagine if we could undo each step of Van Gogh's Starry Night and replicate the paint strokes dab by dab on his original canvas.

It is often difficult to determine where one computer artist left off and another began. It is also difficult to trace the original image to an owner. Some computer artists embrace these unique aspects of the medium. Computer artist Esther Parada refers to her work as "the ongoing process of challenging received material" (Kirchman, 1990, p. 31). She "captures" or "copies" the work of other artists and photographers in order to re-work it, and properly credits the appropriated images as "embezzlements" rather than as simple thefts. "They seize not just images but systems of belief," she maintains, since the codes, conventions, and schemata of the other artists are embedded in her work (Kirchman, 1990, p. 32).

Female computer artists are concerned with gender issues. As Lyons (1994) points out, the "personal" of personal computers means "men": men who invent the computers, design the systems, and author the software. Constructs based on male-only research permeate the entire system, from decisions about software characteristics to communication issues in user groups and exhibition sites (p. 72). One provocative panel discussion at SIGGRAPH 95 considered the problem of the Cartesian Coordinate System itself, which one participant described as a "male-biased edifice of the dominant white male patriarchy" (personal communication, August 11, 1995). As Danto (1980) wrote, "A system of conventions gets embodied in equipment, materials, training, available facilities and sites, systems of notation, and the like, all of which must be changed if any one component is" (p. 186). Like the issue of appropriation, gender construction is an important issue for education today.

Unfortunately, for many reasons sketched in this paper, the computer art world is still highly private. Many art educators did not have access to computer images, practice, and theory in their own education. The general public is beginning to have some hands-on access to artistic technology, but "Paint" components like that included with Microsoft's Word for Windows are very simple forms of art technology. Most exhibition sites and venues are electronic and require access to the Internet, but the Internet itself is a new concept for most people. In the traditional art community, concrete computer art is still generally exhibited as "technoculture" in science centers like San Francisco's Exploratorium or in media centers like Santa Fe's Center for Contemporary Art. Thus computer art continues to carry associations of the scientific, technical, or "alternate."

Exiting the Computer Art World:
The Place of Education

Communication and education are the two greatest challenges for integrating computer art into the field of art. Although both the popular media and public education have served as powerful disseminators in other areas of art, computer artworks are rarely reviewed by the media or discussed in art classrooms. Teachers and reviewers who are requested to describe computer artworks are often at a loss. Not only are the medium and conventions unfamiliar, but the terminology for describing the appearance and construction of computer art images is different. In a recent study (Johnson, 1993), 112 art terms commonly used to describe visual structure had different correlative terms in computer graphics. Further, 57 of the computer graphic correlatives represent concepts which expand or radically alter the meaning of traditional elements and principles of art. Table 3 compares differences in terminology. It is difficult, if not impossible, for clear communication or effective education to occur without a grasp of the differences in terms.

Without education, experience, or dissemination of issues and practices in the field of computer art, neither members of traditional art worlds nor those of science and industry can easily understand it. It may be useful to look at the kinds of
### Table 3

#### Design Vocabulary: Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Art</th>
<th>Computer Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>element</td>
<td>primitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mark, point</td>
<td>pixel; dot-per-inch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line, path, continuous mark, moving point</td>
<td>row; segment; vector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contour line</td>
<td>silhouette line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross-contour, interior contour line</td>
<td>contour line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connecting line</td>
<td>segment; vector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corner</td>
<td>vertex; node, handle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edge</td>
<td>bounding side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pattern</td>
<td>default, selected, created patterns; area fills; hatch patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allover, continuous pattern (local)</td>
<td>fill, opacity map, texture map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surfaces</td>
<td>materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plane</td>
<td>bitmap; polygon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two-dimensional shape</td>
<td>polygon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three-dimensional shape, 2D projection</td>
<td>solid object; polyhedral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illusion</td>
<td>simulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>projection</td>
<td>extrusion; loft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plastic shapes</td>
<td>extruded polygons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>area</td>
<td>region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive shape</td>
<td>region; polygon; polyhedral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative shape, space</td>
<td>bitmap; void</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soft-edge shadow</td>
<td>penumbra, fall-off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highlight</td>
<td>specular highlight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>value</td>
<td>contrast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Black boxes indicate conceptual differences in meaning, which are explained on the following page.

---

### Conceptual Differences in Terminology for Design Elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mark, point ≠ pixel; dot-per-inch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In computer graphics, marks take two different forms—neither of which are the same as points. &quot;Pixels&quot; are marks on the screen and &quot;dots-per-inch&quot; (dpi) are corresponding marks in the printed image. &quot;Points&quot; are the locations where invisible gridlines cross on the monitor screen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>line, path, continuous mark, moving point ≠ row; segment; vector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While different terms for line have similar meanings in traditional art, &quot;row,&quot; &quot;segment,&quot; and &quot;vector&quot; are computer terms for lines created in three different spatial environments: pixel graphics, 2D graphics, or 3D graphics. Both marks and points are also contiguous, not continuous, in computer graphics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>corner ≠ vertex; node, handle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The computer graphic terms &quot;vertex,&quot; &quot;node,&quot; and &quot;handle&quot; indicate the generative potential of shapes. Computer shapes do not have &quot;fixed&quot; corners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pattern ≠ default, selected, or created patterns; area fills; texture maps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In computer graphics, patterns are usually selected and then &quot;assigned&quot; (or transferred) to fit areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>surface ≠ material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In traditional analog media, the surface of an object in a picture is the same thing as its side or &quot;face.&quot; In computer graphics, the surface is called a &quot;material.&quot; It can be manipulated independently of faces (called &quot;facets&quot;).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plane ≠ bitmap; polygon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The computer terms &quot;bitmap&quot; and &quot;polygon&quot; distinguish the idea of a plane as either a surface or a shape, and indicate the program is pixel-based (Paint) or 2D (Draw).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3D shape, 2D projection ≠ 3D solid object, polyhedral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In computer graphics, 3D shapes are 360°forms in a geometric environment. They are called &quot;solid objects&quot; or polyhedrals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
knowledge that Becker once described as characteristic of an art "expert," since similar characteristics form the basis of discipline-based art education objectives. Becker's list includes knowledge of:

the history of attempts to make similar works in that medium or genre; characteristic features of different styles or periods in the history of the art; the merits of different positions on key issues in the history, development, and practice of the art; an acquaintance with various versions of the same work; and the ability to respond emotionally and cognitively to the manipulation of standard elements in the vocabulary of the medium. (Becker, 1982, p. 48)

Although most teachers and students do not seek to become experts on computer art, only with some modicum of understanding about each of these areas can we take part in the conventions between artist and audience.

Computer art is evolving simultaneously with our lives and the lives of our students. As art educators, we have a responsibility to teach students how to understand and critique images that they would otherwise take for granted. We can do this in many ways. We can bring our understanding of art history as an evolutionary, culturally-bound perspective to the forefront of our computer art teaching. We can help students examine how symbols, metaphors and schemata are used by computer artists to "manipulate" response, just as we do with images and objects produced by artists in other media. We can help them separate the use of abstractions, stylistic mannerisms, and technical practices, studying the history of artistic conventions, and engaging in critical dialogue. Computer art integrates many disciplines including math, science, fine art, cultural studies; and frequently, language arts, architecture, and engineering. Thus the computer artworld offers a whole new sphere of interdisciplinary opportunities for art educators.

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Violence & Generation X

How the New Right is Managing the "Moral Panic" Through Television and Teen Films

jan jagodzinski

Screen Violence

The continual "cultural wars" between "Generation X" ("baby busters" whose birth years begin with 1961, aged 11-35), and New Right "baby boomers" (whose birth years range from 1946 to 1960), 1 around the issue of violence as represented in the popular cultural forms of film and television provide critically concerned art educators with an opportune moment to examine how conservative rhetoric has made "moral panic" an object of current discourses. 2 This highly-charged debate, now literally and symbolically represented by the censorship that "V-chip" technology provides, 3 is explored in this essay from a seemingly non-populist position given the current tide against the proliferation of violence. It is argued that the issues that surround violence veil broader socio-economic concerns.

1 The term Generation X, or the so-called "13th generation," is taken from Neil Howe & Bill Strauss' 13th Generation: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail? (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). It is not meant to be applied to a predominantly white middle class "twentysomething" consumer crowd. Rather, it is a generation "that reaches across the board—rich and poor, black and white, Hispanic and Asian, male and female, celebrity and everyman... Babies born between 1961 and 1964 are tired of hearing themselves called 'baby boomers' when they know they don't carry the usual hippie-cum-yuppie baggage" (p.12). Furthermore, not all "boomers" are conservative and right leaning. I am referring to those boomers who define themselves as the "moral majority," as well as those who look "back to the future" for school reform. In art education, the figure of Ralph Smith whose "excellence" crusade regarding art educational curricula would qualify for such a categorization.


3 Since the writing of this essay President Clinton has signed a bill on February 11, 1996 mandating that every television set manufactured must be equipped with V-microchip technology which would allow parents to censor violence on network programming. The V-chip automatically blocks out programming that exceeds predetermined levels of violence, sexuality and coarse language as seen fit by the private whims of the household's "moral guardians." Invented by a Canadian from Calgary, the V-chip received early approval by Keith Spicer, the chairman of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications (CRTC) who has been in the forefront of pushing the U.S. to "chip in" (to) Canada's effort at eliminating gratuitous violence from television.

4 "Girlie" culture refers to a specific performative posture (cf. Judith Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. [New York: Routledge, 1990]) by teenage girls against the adult world whereby the dualisms of bitch/whore are played with as "subversion as affirmation." Although Madonna may well be the paradigm case of this posturing it is in the "girlie" music industry where this is most evident with such groups as Shampoo-Pop, the GO-GO's, and especially the videos of Heather Novas and Juliana Hatfields.
male’s technical phallus by occupying its driver’s seat. With it she roams over both a figural (i.e., moral) and literal desert in the post-apocalyptic world of 2033 where parents play no role what-so-ever. This tough-girl image, with a life-style wedded to sex, drugs, and violence, is the very exemplar of what the “new” American and Canadian conservatism (by the early 1990s, over a decade old!) rails against: “a youth in crisis.” The more spectacular aspects of this “crisis”—teen crime as teenage entertainment (“kill for thrills”), teen delinquency, teen pregnancies, teen suicide, demon and Satan worship, gang and cult involvement—have been mobilized by the neo-conservative Right for the articulation of a moral panic (i.e., a felt crisis, or “affective epidemic” of a general societal breakdown). 6

The counter-hegemonic activity of struggle (i.e., the logic of the contingent social for drawing the line between state and civil society) takes place in any number of locations—in law, the market place, the family, the school—but it is popular culture that is especially an important place for a conjunctural analysis

7 The language of articulation, hegemony, overdetermination, and conjunction is that of Antonio Gramsci as utilized by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985). It should be pointed out immediately that the so-called hegemonic “struggle” is a complex process which involves pressure groups and self-help groups that counter and contest the vocality of the traditional moral guardians of the Right by directly influencing the media. There is no clearly defined moral panic but a “media flow” of debate between them. See Angela McRobbie, 1992. The complexity is captured by James Davison Hunter’s Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America (New York: Basic Books, 1992). I use the term “popular culture” to avoid any misunderstanding that this is to be equated with “mass media” which assumes that audiences are the dupes of its ideological effects. Rather, what makes a text (film, television sit-com, series, soap opera etc.) popular is its ability to be polysemic in its interpretative possibilities. A text’s survival based on its ratings and economic return relies on the measure of its wide appeal.

8 In the interests of space I wish only to quickly point to the magnitude of this pressure and its long standing history. In the ‘50s and early ‘60s television programs like Dragnet and The Untouchables were criticized for encouraging teenage delinquency. In the ‘70s, Peggy Charren, the founder of Action for Children’s Television in the United States, lobbied to set limits on the advertising time allowed during children’s programs. More recently, U.S. Senator Paul Simon has led a crusade against TV violence, while U.S. Attorney General Janet
news violence from cartoon violence, for instance. An ideology of protection (most commonly in the form of censorship) is then mobilized “for their own good” as the Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller so succinctly put it in the title of one of her books. Usually a sensational murder committed by an adolescent (the general rule here being the younger the killer, and the more heinous the crime, the more sensational and dramatic will be its rhetorical effects) is promptly linked to some horror film, television program, fantasy game or toy that the teen murderer has recently seen, or fantasized which consequently influenced the crime through its powerful imagery. A causal link is then posited, even when months later after the teen’s trial it was found that the alleged horror film(s) had not been involved.

Reno has threatened the movie and television industries with anti-violence legislation unless they clean up their acts voluntarily. Terry Rakolta of Americans for Responsible Television sees TV as the only thing that can be controlled since drugs and education can’t be, thus making television the scapegoat for all of society’s ills. As recently as August 1995, President Clinton has seriously thought of endorsing a V-chip—a device that would block out incoming programs that have a high “V” for violence rating. (The U.S. National Coalition on Television Violence lists such acts as grabbing and shoulder tapping as violent acts, making the definition of violence almost a meaningless task.) In Canada, a new anti-violence code has been put in place, with CRTC Chairman Keith Spicer also thinking about endorsing the V-chip, making parents instant censors. In England, Mary Whitehouse is Britain’s leading moral majority campaigner who made headlines by attacking the soap opera EastEnders for its excessive verbal abuse. For the British situation on the campaign against television violence see David Buckingham, Children Talking Television: The Making of Television Literacy (London and Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1993), pp. 3–14. In Germany, France, and Austria there have been similar lobbies against excessive violence. Austria’s public television ORF introduced more restrictive measures in 1993. Surprisingly, northern countries such as Sweden and Norway have always had tough measures regarding screen violence whereas pornography and nudity have no censorship.

Alice Miller, For Their Own Good (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984). Miller is best known for her development of “schwartz pedagogy” which argues that many educators inadvertently do more damage than good because they remain insensitive to the curriculum as seen through the eyes of their students.

This happened with the famous case concerning the killing of 2 year-old James Bulger by two 10 year-old boys in England in February 1993. It was claimed that the two youths had been influenced by the horror film Child

Why adults are not affected in the same way as teenagers by screen violence is attributed to their enhanced discriminating abilities; their stronger fortitude and moral fiber. They are said to be more responsible citizens since they are “grown up.” However, a common finding by media researchers is an effect known as “developmental disdain” or the “third person effect.” While adults claim that youth are unable to psychically protect themselves from the effects of simulated violence, they themselves claim to be immune. This same common sense

Play 3 which one of the boy’s father had rented. Several months later it was discovered that no such tape was ever rented. In Canada, the Montréal Massacre where a gunman, Marc Lépine, shot and killed fourteen women in the École Polytechnique in 1991, was attributed to his anti-feminism; his actions were said to be prompted by the media violence he watched. The Montréal based anti-violence group known as Pacifist staged the creation of an outdoor sculpture where over 12,000 toy guns, and GI Joe figures were collected from schoolchildren, heaped on a pile, and unveiled on the second anniversary of the massacre. In a recent film, The Program (1993), about the vigors of making it on a college football team, several of the team members lie vertically, one after the other, on the white line that separates traffic on a busy highway, as cars whiz past them by on both sides. It is both a dare and a way to “pump” themselves up for the ensuing game. The week following the films release, three deaths and four injuries were reported throughout the United States as boys tried to mimic the prank. The scene was subsequently cut from the film. Stories such as these make it appear that there is a direct correlation between acts of murder and playing with war toys, or that exposure to high school pranks will be imitated somewhere, sometime. Stories of juvenile murder appear regularly that are attributed to media, war toys or dangerous mind games. Ronald Lampasi killed his stepfather and wounded his mother in 1983. Then at the age of sixteen he claimed he was acting out a scenario from the fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons. This was followed by the concern about the effects of the game and its relationship to Satanism. For an opposing view see George Gerbner, “Television Violence: The Power and the Peril.” In Gender, Race and Class in Media, eds. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1995), pp. 547–557, and Alison Bass, “DoSlasher Films Breed Real-Life Violence?”, pp. 185–189, same volume. Bass cites numerous incidents and “evidence” that there is a direct cause between screen violence and the execution of violent crimes.

Another variation of this “third person effect” is pointed out by David Sholle when teaching media education. He finds that often adults and students are willing to be critical of media texts pointing to the surface effects of sexism, racism, hyper-patriotism, but then it turns out that it is always “other people” who are manipulated by the media, and not “them.” See Peter McLaren, Rhonda Hammer, David Sholle, & Susan Reilly, Rethinking Media Literacy: A Critical Pedagogy of Representation (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 240.
prejudice, in fact, occurs all the way down the various age differentiations amongst siblings. The older teenagers claim that their younger brothers and sisters should not be watching screen violence because they will begin to mimic it, while they themselves are more mature and immune, needing no such "protection." Within their logic The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles all of a sudden are a bad influence since their younger siblings are said never to have engaged in karate kicking before the advent of the series. That aggressive behavior and conflict resolution is part of children's play culture is not given the weight that it deserves. Rather, alarmist and spectacular incidents such as "swarming" and "bullying" are singled out as instances of increased violence on the playground which are blamed on televised influences.

It would require the dissemination of an enormous amount of statistical data, which claims that there has been an actual decrease in violent crime, before there would be any change in the spectacular perceptions that have been already mobilized. Despite some increases in violent crimes committed by juveniles in the 1980s, the aggregate arrest rates for serious violent offenses and for serious property offenses committed by U.S. adolescents have declined since the mid-1970s. A U.S. Congress report points out that only a small subset of adolescent offenders commit multiple serious offenses.\(^{12}\) Likewise, there was no actual rise in adolescent crime during the '50s to precipitate the kind of vociferous public response witnessed in the form of debates concerning censorship, television effects, comic books, and rock 'n' roll.\(^{13}\) And while female arrest rates due to criminal behavior have gone up statistically, there is no way of knowing whether this has been due to the changes in attitude toward women in general, or whether there has been an increase in the number of crimes women commit. And while homicide is the leading cause of death amongst African-Americans aged fifteen to nineteen, is this higher incidence of African-American violent crime a marker of cultural difference, or rather is it representative of differential policing methods? Again, the answer is open to speculation as to the "work" (policies, actions) the statistical evidence is meant to mobilize. If nonnuclear families contribute to a decrease in parental supervision of children, are they then contributing to juvenile crime? The use of statistical crime figures to incite panic against contemporary youth who are compared unfavorably to a previous "golden age" where social stability and strong moral discipline acted as a deterrent for delinquency and disorder has historically been a typical ploy of conservatives. In fact, when scrutiny is applied to such claims, no "golden age" has ever been found.\(^{14}\)

While it is only the extremely pathologically ill teens who are unable to distinguish "reality" from fiction (i.e., teens who spend an excessive amount of time watching television which can result in the atrophy of their imaginations,\(^{15}\) living in impossible home conditions where heroine addiction and parental neglect are sickeningly obvious) these sensational exceptions have become the neo-conservative Right's way to discipline and keep youth under surveillance by presenting such instances as if they were normative everyday occurrences. In this way the breakdown of traditional forms of authority, patriarchy, law and order, and the institutions of their enforcement like the school, church, and the traditional family, receive the status of renewed leadership and moral guidance. And although it is youth in general who are being targeted\(^{16}\) in the United States, the threat of youth has been specifically and

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15 The "magical number" that is said to fry a kid's brains is set at twenty-five hours of television viewing or more a week. See Dorothy G. and Jerome L. Singer, The House of Make-Believe: Play and the Developing Imagination (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). If the Nielsen figures show that the American child born into a home watches an average of 7 hours a day, then virtually all kid's brains have already been fried!

16 In Bruno Bettelheim's terms the "generation gap" exists only as a time of youth dis-ease and economic non-profitability. See Bruno Bettelheim,
symbolically centralized to African-American and Hispanic-American youth. The African-American youth is the internal Other that defines a threat to the stability of the American social order, much like the neo-Nazis youth groups are the internal Other in Germany and Austria, while the Hooligans play a similar role in Britain. The films of African-American film makers: Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing (1989) and Malcolm X (1992), John Singleton’s Boyz N the Hood (1991) and Poetic Justice (1993), and Mario Van Peebles’s New Jack City (1991) were said to incite violence amongst youth audiences. Rumors circulated that actual fights and squabbles broke out in the theaters upon their first screening. In Howe & Strauss’ \textit{17} “flip-hip” description of the Generation X, it is quite clear that the threat of disorder is coming from this New Jack antiworld. Gangster rap is packaged, commodified and then bought up by a large population of white youth who identify with its celebration of sex, violence, and rebelliousness. Their description succinctly captures the fear that is spread.

New Jack 13ers perceive an outside world that does not like them, does not want them, does not trust them, and (as they see it) has nothing to offer them. Glancing across at the financial towers and suburban influence that few of them will ever touch, New Jackers shed even the most basic social conventions that mark a civilized society. Hear them rap a melodyless cant of sexism, racism, and soulless mayhem, celebrating the very nihilism that older generations blame them for.

Watch them swagger around in symbolic uniforms—backwards caps, shades, leather jackets, combat fatigues, pump-sneakers, or jackboots—that conjure up the soul-dead violence of robots. Avoid them as their thug-armies rampage for random victims. Hand them the keys—quick—when they carjack you. Fear them as they commit “opportunity crimes” against random passerby, or “hate crimes” against women, gays, or Asian shopkeepers, or “business crimes” against each other. Shoot them down, ship them out, lock them up. If you can catch them. And you’ll never catch all of them.\textit{18}

In Henry Louis Gates, Jr. words: “When you’re faced with a stereotype, you can disavow it or you can embrace it and exaggerate it to the nth degree. The rappers take the white Western culture’s worst fear of black men and make a game out of it.”\textit{19}

\textbf{Trash and Talk: The Medias of Support}

The articulation of the object(s) of moral panic is \textit{overdetermined} by a number of other media discourses besides feature length films and television’s simulated killings which criss-cross and reinforce each other constantly to sustain an affective media impact, and to keep the “youth crisis” current and reproducible. Foremost among these supportive media industries has been “trash TV” (\textit{A Current Affair, America’s Most Wanted}) and daytime “confessional” television talk-shows. In the former case, the pursuit of America’s “most wanted,” and the exhibition of what is sold as various perversities and aberrations, is staged in a realistic style which tries to achieve a documentary realism that blurs the distinction between it and “actual” news reportage. This effect is achieved by using High 8, hand held video cameras; mobile, on-location shooting using

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\textit{17} Howe and Strauss’ book on the 13th generation (Generation X) is a literal compendium of Joel Schumacher’s \textit{Falling Down}, (1993), where D-FENDS (Michael Douglas) turns psychotic and begins killing off everything that middle-America perceives as a threat to its stability: Koreans who can’t speak proper English, grocery prices that are too high, roads that are under constant repair, gang members who harass innocent victims, neo-Nazis who foster hate, the hypocritical hospitality of fast food establishments, the ostentatious display of wealth (private golf courses and huge homes) by wealthy business men and plastic surgeons. Howe and Strauss write as if the moralizing Baby-Boomers want to eliminate 13ers in the same way as D-FENDS by describing the scene/seen from the 13er’s point of view. Unusual.

\textit{18} Ibid., p. 121.

\textit{19} Ibid., p. 140.
natural lighting; actual policemen and policewomen; and “natural” actors as criminals, along with documentary newsreel evidence to further strengthen its modality.20

“Confessional” talk-shows present the other symbolic “nodal point” for the articulation of violence.21 The show’s host introduces topics and themes that provide a stamp of authenticity to the social crisis by way of bodily displays such as tears and emotional outbursts. Guests are invited to relate (confess) their introductions to topics and themes that provide a stamp of authenticity to the social crisis by way of bodily displays such as tears and emotional outbursts. Guests are invited to relate (confess) their personal tragedy to a studio audience. The confessional mode is offered more for its exhibitionary value; it is the act or performance that is proffered.22 Guests’ confessions are communication acts that affirm, articulate and capture something, a pseudo-materiality23 that is “shared” in a culture—about deviance, transgression, and the emotion of guilt. Psychoanalytically speaking, these confessions embody the very Thing24 a society is unable to express symbolically, which is its “spectral supplement” or “spectral apparition.”25 The Thing as a Master-Signifier (i.e., as a signifier without a signified) is that something about which the confessors need not make any positive claims. Spectral apparitions are foreclosed from such talk. So whether the talk is about illicit affairs, divorce rates, freaks, serial killers, gangster rap, etc. as what are taken to be the current societal exemplars of moral panic, the ultimate paradox of such symbolizing gestures is that society is held together by these very transgressions that appear on trash television, which, paradoxically prevent any form of society’s closure into some harmonious whole where violence has been eliminated. In other words, the very absence of a harmonious society acts as a spectral apparition (as Thing) enabling every confessed “immoral act” as yet another failed attempt to achieve a peaceful harmonious loving world. Moral panic rests, therefore, on an impossibility, an unfathomable limit that cannot be objectivized, located in what Lacan calls the Real, a space that is beyond language. Taken together, these confessional acts point beyond language to a bond linking its members together and implying a shared relationship with such an impossibility. However, what is important about this confessional practice is that it is the act that is most important 26—and not the evidence or the penalties that go along with the confession (e.g., the banal pence given to confessants by priests for what appear to be grievous sins). The confession assures the stability of the social order (i.e., the recognition of the Big Other).27 The self-incriminating subject

20 Modality, as the perceived reality of the content, can be characterized as being very weak (i.e., artificial like a cartoon strip), or very strong (i.e., like the news). See Bob Hodge and David Tripp, Children and Television: A Semiotic Approach (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), pp. 126–131. The spectacle and allure of trash television was meant to be ironically and socially critiqued by Oliver Stone’s recent Natural Born Killers (1994) where, in the tradition of Bonnie and Clyde, two psychotic killers—Micky and Mallory Knox as Generation X representatives (both of whom are products of abusive families) become media stars with the nation as their fan club watching the chase on the news. The character of Morton Downey, Jr., who was once considered the king of trash media stars with the characters of M & M Murders is a mise-en-abîme of his once successful New York late night talk show. Stone presents Morton Downey, Jr.’s character as a self-serving, ego-grabbing, arrogant television host who will do anything to boost ratings by interviewing “America’s Most Wanted.” Ironically his character is played by Michael Downey, Jr.

21 Laclau and Mouffe (1985) utilize this Lacanian term to designate locations where a number of “floating signifiers” that circulate in an ideological field are temporarily sewn together. Each nodal point harbors a “master-signifier.”

22 The confessional mode as developed from the Church discourse and introduced into the modernist discourses of science (i.e., anthropology, ethnography, psychiatry) was first developed by Michel Foucault, especially in his The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol. 1. Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

23 This pseudo-materiality which subverts the classic ontological oppositions of reality and illusion is worked out by Jacques Derrida. See his Spectres de Marx (Paris: Galilée, 1993), pp. 25–36.


26 The necessity of specularity and its entertainment value is what finally did in Phil Donahue. His ratings could no longer keep up with the more sensational talk shows.

27 Another psychoanalytic term which refers to Jacques Lacan’s claim that what gives force to the institutionalization of the law is a symbolic order that is already in place.
TV talk-shows are, therefore, a cauldron for a society's psychic ills. The audience is usually seeded with members who themselves have gone through a similar crisis in their lives. It is not unusual, for example, on Oprah to invite guests who reflect the show's focus (i.e., AIDS "victims," child abuse sufferers, wives of convicted rapists, and so on). The distinction between invited guests and audience becomes blurred. Sally Jesse Raphael, for example, often invites a member from the audience to provide a summative analysis of what advice he or she would offer the invited couples to solve their domestic disputes. The community of viewers on most talk-shows enters into a position that approximates "citizenship" in as much as they participate in the proceedings, even if their participation is more often only as witnesses to the testimony that is being given. Geraldo is the exemplar here. Although most talk-shows are pre-recorded, usually there are "live" phone-in questions from the larger viewing audience at home (e.g. Donahue). These pre-recorded phone calls add to the actuality of the event, and reinforce the idea that the "critical problem" exists in society as a whole, making it a common concern. An expert is usually called in to confirm the authenticity of the testimony, and how best to "manage" it. Both Donahue and Sally followed this model. During this time, often traditional values of the nuclear family are reinstated, and the power of patriotism reconfirmed in establishing the nation as one big family. The host is never the expert, but plays more the role of a concerned citizen, mediator, and interlocutor, who brings guests and audience together. Of late, many of these talk show hosts, especially Sally Jesse Raphael, but also Ricki Lake, have become catalysts for reuniting "lost" family members to reinstate a sense of "community," and to restore dispersed and dysfunctional families (e.g., dads and mothers who had abandoned their children, adopted siblings in search of their "natural" families, runaway teenagers who want to come back into the fold, and so on).

Geraldo, The Oprah Winfrey Show, Donahue, Sally Jesse Raphael, Jenny Jones, Ricki Lake, the defunct Morton Downy, Jr. Show (a latenight exception) to name the most popular, help promote the spread of a social paranoia where no one is safe anywhere, not even in "small town" America. The Ricki Lake Show takes a quirky side to the youth crisis by having teenagers "confess" to each other how much they hate one another, or how confused they are concerning pregnancy, love, dating and other matters of the heart. Either way, teenagers come across as having a confused and bizarre set of values confirming that in a postmodern society adolescence is not a time of essential innocence, as it was portrayed in the modernist era, but that all youth are essentially guilty. Supplementing this paranoia concerning youth are slick news shows like Hard Copy, PrimeTime, Inside Edition, the occasional 24 hrs., and numerous television specials that focus on particular topics such as teen pregnancy, teen suicide, teen runaways, and teen prostitution. News magazines like Time, Atlantic, MacLeans and Newsweek, which represent the moral voice of white middle-class Americans and Canadians, regularly run feature articles on the youth crisis which further fuel the fears of a more mobile, middle-to-upper conservative class who keep themselves informed of current events through these magazines.28

28 Examples include: Atlantic's cover, "Growing Up Scared" (Karl Zinsmeister, June, 1990); Time's cover, "The Deadly Love Affair Between America's Youth and Firearms" (Jon D. Hull, "A Boy and His Gun," 1993); Newsweek's cover, "Teen Violence: Wild in the Streets" (Barbara Kantrowitz, "Wild in the Streets," 1993); Time's cover "Our Violent Kids" (Anastasia Toufexis, June, 1989); David Ansen's "The Kid's Aren't Alright: A Powerful Portrait of Deadly, Disaffected Teens, Newsweek, June 1. The German equivalent, Der Spiegel and the Austrian equivalent, Profil have been reporting on the same "youth crisis" with equally vivid front cover designs.
Boomer Nostalgia and Xers Counter-Nostalgia

The moralizers who have articulated the moral panic against the X Generation are Baby-boomers, those 35 years and older who are over-represented in society. Here a nostalgia for a childhood they remember can sometimes bring about some rather comically naive results. In April of 1992, for instance, the Toronto Globe and Mail carried a story about a Vancouver elementary school in the suburb of Coquitlam where a group of parents introduced skipping, marbles, and balls to children twice a week during recess because they felt that these children had an impoverished playing culture by watching too much television. With the institutionalization of charter schools wherein parents have a direct say in the school’s curriculum more regressive measures such as this one can be expected. Tipper Gore’s book, Raising PG Kids in an X-Rated Society, is another exemplar in this regard. Her action to have a warning label (an X-rating) placed on record albums at the Parents’ Music Resource Center hearings participates in the same simplistic copy-cat logic. This ideology of Boomer protection is perhaps best exemplified by The Children’s Defense Fund, the Center for Humanities and Guidance Associates (a rhetorically label (an X-rating) placed on record albums at the Parents’ Music Resource Center hearings participates in the same simplistic copy-cat logic. This ideology of Boomer protection is perhaps best exemplified by The Children’s Defense Fund, the Center for Humanities and Guidance Associates (a rhetorically

29 See Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, 1993 for demographic evidence. As an academic book, Alan Bloom’s The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1987), which trashed the X Generation, went on to be an unprecedented best seller, eagerly read and heralded by conservative Boomers as the definitive statement as to what’s wrong with America. Bloom took his thesis on the road (included was the European circuit as well), arguing from campus to campus that the Western can was in sore need of rehabilitation. A few years later, his student Francis Fukuyama wrote The End of History and the Last Man to vindicate Bloom’s thesis that the young will never know “true” beauty, have “true” passion or possess “true” beliefs.


33 In 13th Generation... (pp. 25-28) some 50 quotes of denigration for the X generation are presented by prominent and outspoken Boomers from a broad cross-section of society (e.g., the Hudson Institute, U.S. Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, Alan Bloom, Paul Hirsh, Louis Gerstner, Jr., President, American Express, Arthur Levine, president of Bradford College, Fortune Magazine, Erroll McDonald, the executive editor, Pantheon Books).

34 Here, not only do I point to myself, but such educators as Henry Giroux, Peter MacLaren, Michale Apple, Geoff Whitey, & Patti Lather, who write critically of the school system, but have little to offer by way of concrete prescriptive praxis being more sociologists than classroom teachers. (The allusion is to Charles A. Reich’s book, The Greening of America [New York: Bantam Books, 1971]).
described a “culture industry” wherein the masses were systematically duped into lives of servitude and consumption. Adorno, in particular, defined high culture as a standard of excellence, as the best society had to offer, consequently it could not be readily understood or consumed by the masses. He saw youth culture as a logical product of postwar media. The “gesture of adolescence” for him was that “which raves for this or that on one day with the ever-present possibility of damning it as idiocy the next.”

Generation X is thereby squeezed by both sides of the Boomer political spectrum who both bring their own brand of nostalgia for the “good old days” that make Generation X’s own culture unable to compare to it. They are simply not good enough, not critical enough, or not hard working enough.

Like the comeback tell-tale sign of the pony-tail for Boomer men, Boomer disposable incomes have defined a mobile and aging youth culture. As these 1960s rock and rollers become grandparents it appears that youth is a state that is available to everyone of any age. The difference between “real youth” (Generation X) and this “juvenilization” becomes marked as being doubly problematic: not only is Generation X very “young” (i.e., immature), but they are also unable to compare to the youth culture as authenticated by baby-boomer desire. The result of this discrimination has resulted in two very different senses of nostalgia. Generation X has tried to develop their own culture—an ahistorical nostalgia that reaches back to the ’50s as a way of critically reacting to Boomer criticism; while the baby-boomers recover the “golden” nostalgia of their own time. An example of Generation X critical nostalgia would be Tim Burton’s Edward Scissorhands (1990) which takes place in any ’50s suburb, U.S.A. where all the houses are designed the same way, painted in the same garish candy-colored colors which clash; where all the cars are American and mid-sized, and where all the streets are spanning clean and totally empty. In the morning all the men leave for work at the same time in their cars which magically appear from automatic garage doors which all open at the same time. The housewives settle down to gossip, eat, play bridge, watch daytime TV, and do routine housework, dressed in leggings, hair-rollers, bed-jackets and garish clothes. In this bucolic seen/scene Burton situates the Generation X teenager—Edward—a freak born with scissors for hands, who believes in love and the homespun platitudes of Kim’s father (Kim narrates the story and is Edward’s primary love interest) ideas regarding laissez-faire capitalism, and the American dream. However, when Edward turns his handicap into a success story (i.e., he becomes a hair-designer and garden landscape artist extraordinare) the entire neighborhood eventually turns against him, showing the underlying savagery of Boomer middle America. Refusing the sexual advances of Mrs. Monroe, and then set-up for committing a robbery by the local rich-boy-cum-bigot, all of a sudden Edward finds himself refused by the bank for financial support, shunned by the entire neighborhood, and labeled a rapist and a criminal. In a similar sense, Robert Zemeckis’s Back to the Future (1985) places the hero in an “Ozzie and Harriet” image of 1950s America populated by ridiculous and simplistic cardboard figures. In such films the narrative no longer exists in a linear time, but is marked by an ahistorical frozen moment that is played like a never ending loop. Likewise a film like Michael Lehmann’s Heathers (1989) is a pastiche-filled teen film that pokes fun at the nihilism that Generation X is said to wallow in.

36 The descent into nostalgia with its accompanied emergence of the pastiche style (instead of parody) is often attributed to Fredric Jameson’s now famous essay, “Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” New Left Review, 146, 1984:53-92.

37 In much the same way David Lynch’s Blue Velvet (1989) presents the middle American town of Lumberville with its Matisse-like cut out houses, white picket fences, perfect green lawns and flowers, as a veneer for the seedy side of life that goes on behind its facade. Burton’s more recent film, A Night Before Christmas (1994), an animation story which blends Halloween and Christmas into a quirky mix, can also be read from a similar point of view (i.e., there is a kernel of horror at the very pit of the most festive time of the year). More recently, Burton has produced Batman, Forever (Joel Schumacher, 1995) which can be read as a reworking of the post-war Batman series along deconstructive lines where two sides of identity are put into flux. As in the previous Batman film, which revealed his sinister side, Batman’s frailties are once more exposed. Finally, Burton’s most recent film, Ed Wood (1995), the “worst” director ever to grace Hollywood, is almost a standing joke for what Hollywood represents!
These nostalgia films are far more critical than the golden nostalgia films of Boomer teen films that try to reassert traditional values, or which rework '50s teen films with a similar intent, (i.e., to diffuse any perceived threat to the conventional order posed by constant teen transgression). The romantic comedies of Boomer John Hughes present simple class issues in the context of a high school rigidly organized according to cliques (i.e., the wealthy vs. the outsiders). The message throughout his films is that girls have to wait until the end of adolescence (at graduation) to fulfill their desires of true love while boys graduate into adult commitment of a job and family. His films present the contentiousness of youth as being normal; this “everyday” banal delinquency, according to Hughes, is overwhelmingly white, heterosexual, and middle class. The Breakfast Club (1985), for instance, is composed of hand-me-down stereotypes from various generic teen pics: the brain, the athlete, the basket case, the princess, the criminal. Nowhere in Hughes’ films is there any attempt to deal with the reality of adolescents coping with their gay or lesbian identifications within a dominant heterosexual society. The Breakfast Club is outright homophobic in this regard.

Boomer nostalgia remakes like Francis Coppola’s Peggy Sue Got Married (1986), which celebrates a social immobility, the logic that who one is, is somehow a destiny; George Lukas’ American Graffiti (1973), which attempted to be a comment on American youth on the edge of the Vietnam era, ended up being a tribute to the Kennedian era; the films of Ron Howard, like Backdraft, Cocoon, Far and Away, and Apollo 13, which present an over-romanticized, exaggerated heroic view of America that never was, and Steven Spielberg (E.T., Jurassic Park, Hook, Casper, Indian Jones series) who has rejuvenated the comic book into filmic form, present the force of Hollywood’s Boomer auteurs who have defined the nostalgia landscape. The nostalgia of the above films are not linked together by the similarity of their narrative structures as they are by the values they celebrate: a time where family, community spirit, and hard work made America great; a time when “good, clean” comic books were read and kids attended Saturday matinees to watch their heroes in action. The quintessential television series of Boomer moralizers, however, was Happy Days (and spin offs like Laverne and Shirley). Here the ’50s came alive through the banality of the Cunningham family. Ron Howard (who also played Opie on the “apple-pie” series The Andy Griffith Show) was cast as the good boy Richie opposite bad boy Fonzie, the leather-jacketed biker. Whereas Marlon Brando (Laslo Benedek’s The Wild One, 1954) and James Dean (Nicholas Ray’s Rebel Without a Cause, 1955) were taken as “serious” delinquents, Fonzie eventually became part of the “all middle-American Cunningham family,” his delinquency becoming a badge of respectability and conformity.

More blatant Boomer displays of the kind of nostalgic educational system they want to see return are represented by such populist films as Stand and Deliver (Ramon Menendez, 1988) and John Avildsen’s Lean on Me (1989). Here the tactics of surveillance (through tracking), tough talk and tough love, “rote” learning, and the discipline of “hard work,” are presumed to be the appropriate measures to assure adolescent development. Lean on Me, which was based on the principal, Joe Clark, roaming the halls of a New Jersey high school wielding a baseball bat, is instructively blatant in this regard.41


40In an examination of six of Hughes’ films by Marianne Whatley, she found that only two of his films had men of color. Both were linked to sexual issues. One film involved a secondary character, a Chinese exchange student named Long Duc Dong. The pornographical pun on his name was used throughout the film. In the second, indirect references to penis size and sexual power of African-American men were used. See her, “Raging Hormones and Powerful Cars: The Construction of Men’s Sexuality in School Sex Education and Popular Adolescent Films,” Journal of Education 170, no. 3 (1988): 100–121.

41A threatening Joe Clark holding a baseball bat appeared on the front cover of Time (January 1988), while Stand and Deliver was reported to be President Reagan’s favorite film. (See also Andrew Britton, “Blissing Out: The Politics of Reaganite Entertainment,” Movie, Vols. 31/32, 1985.) These films are in the tradition of the prototype school problem film: Richard Brooks’ The Blackboard Jungle, 1955. (To Sir with Love was the British remake.) The Blackboard Jungle was a graphic depiction of the growing juvenile delinquency problem in the 50s. It was censored in several states and so to stop the uproar a disclaimer was attached to the beginning of the film stating that America had a sound school system, but it was necessary to make the public aware of the rising concern over juvenile delinquency. The spoof of such films was Teachers (Arthur Hiller, 1984).
Freeman, as Joe Clark, popularized the New Right’s ideal of a black American getting tough with other black Americans: the vigilante administrator who took matters into his own hands. There is a remarkable contrast made between the good old days and the bad new days of East Side High School in Paterson, New Jersey at the very beginning of the film. Kids are seated in rows, competing in spelling-bees, desperately and enthusiastically waving their hands because they want to give the answer and be recognized by the teacher. Morgan Freeman is presented as a young enthusiastic civil rights teacher, firing up his kids to the virtues of American democracy and its dream for equality and the good life. These scenes fade away as the halls fill with “grungy-looking” punk teens, moving chaotically about—pushing and shoving; lockers and walls are now covered with graffiti; there is loud discordant music blaring over the school’s loudspeakers. This stark contrast succinctly captures the populist imagination of what schools were like then and now. New Right Boomer nostalgia covers up the memory of sex, drugs, and rock & roll with abstinence, coca-cola, and golden oldies, and then says that these have been replaced by AIDS, crack, punk and Rap.

The adult Boomer disciplinary gaze through the teenage film pic is cast in yet two other ways. First, is the accusation that general social apathy and boredom are attributed to the spoils of a middle-or-upper class. The classic example here is Bret Easton Ellis’s Less than Zero (1985), a story about the apathy of upper-class Los Angeles youth. The division between absent adults and affectless youths is repeated here. Besides the failure of the family, the abuse of class power is an attributing cause. Rich kids in this scenario have been “spoilt rotten.” They have too much money and free time which is spent in the fast lane (i.e., drugs, sex, and fast cars). Julian (Robert Downey, Jr.) requires excesses of excitement (through drugs) before he can “feel” anything. Second is the redeeming idea that despite the worst depravities kids can commit, there is always hope, and such hope is always presented as a heroic struggle. Thus, in The Basketball Diaries (Scott Kalvert, 1994), Oscar, (played by Leonardo DiCaprio), who is totally heroin dependent, pulls himself out of the gutter and becomes a New York “confessory” poet. In The Thing Called Love (Peter Bogdanovich, 1994), which has the additional distinction of featuring the James Dean look-alike River Phoenix who died of a drug overdose (confirming the living fast and dying young scenario), Miranda (Samantha Mathis) must learn that to make it in Nashville as a singer, she requires perseverance and personal heartache before her songs can “mean” anything (i.e., sound “authentic” and “from the heart”). This is not unlike Ben Stiller’s Reality Bites (1993) which tells the X Generation that it’s a tough world out there so they had better start their jobs wherever and whenever they can despite their (over) qualifications.42

Family “Matters”

New Right Boomers highly overestimate the traditional nuclear family. Its ideal representation in the “golden days” of Boomer television (e.g., The Andy Griffith Show and Happy Days) make the recent filmic spoof of ‘70s television series, The Partridge Family (Betty Thomas, 1994), so ridiculously funny, while schmaltzy celebrations of the family in films like A Dog Called Beethoven (Brian Levant, 1992) make it appear “funnily” ridiculous. In the New Right’s search for a nostalgia of authority, many teen films attempt to make teenage anomie a result of a dysfunctional family (i.e., the presence of a weak or absent father and a working and, therefore uncaring mother). The quintessential movie in this regard has been Tim Hunter’s River’s

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42 During the International Youth Year 1980, the General Conference of UNESCO in Belgrade produced a comprehensive report entitled, Youth in the 1980s, which characterized the coming decade as one that was going to be one of scarcity, unemployment, underemployment, ill-employment, anxiety, defensiveness, pragmatism, and even subsistence and survival. In Charles Acland, Science Fiction, pp. 1-3.

43 This is brilliantly developed by Vivian Sobchack, “Child/ Alien/ Father: Patriarchal Crisis and Generic Exchange.” In Close Encounters: Film, Feminism and Science Fiction. Constance Penley, Elisabeth Lyon, Lynn Spigel, and Janet Bergstrom, eds. (Minneapolis and Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 3-30. Sobchack shows how the emasculated bourgeois nuclear family has been portrayed by the coming together of the SF, horror, and family melodramas genres during the ‘80s and early ’90s. These three genres attempt to restore the family by working out in a conservative fashion the narrative resolution to the contemporary weakening of patriarchal authority, and the glaring contradictions which exist between the mythology of the family relations and their actual social practice.
Edge (1987) which represents the spectacle of wasted youth and youth gone wild. The story is loosely based on a murder that took place in Milpitas, California in 1981. It tells the story of a young man (Samson) who strangles his girlfriend (Jamie) for no apparent reason. He then invites his friends to view her body, which he has necrophilically violated. The teenagers react in a confused and emotionless manner. No one reports the killing to the police; they do not seem to be able to grasp the tragedy of their friend’s death, nor the reprehensibility of the murder. The story raises the question how such anesthetization is possible. These deadened and apathetic youths, like the girl’s body by the river’s edge, are like the “living dead.” In a Lacanian psychoanalytic sense, they are in need of a “second death.” The film presents the teenager as someone who demands a proper burial for, as they are, they cannot find a proper place in the symbolic order. In other words the “living dead youth” insist that something be done, otherwise they will continue to “haunt” adults. Throughout the film teenage dysfunctionality is attributed to parental neglect. The traditional family has been cannibalized. It is the parents who have put their children in this living hell by shirking their responsibility. Youth and adults live in separate worlds. The adults in River’s Edge exist in exclusively closed locations. Mothers are presented as disembodied voices, or always leaving for work with no time to interact with their children; fathers are non-existent, or as step-dads they don’t care; or they sit alone in the dark watching TV, oblivious to their kids’ coming and goings.

Mother bashing is particularly prevalent in Boomer moralizing films. Variations of Kramer vs. Kramer are continually played over and over again with the male parent often exempt from any wrong doing. In one of the latest remakes, it is Robin Williams who is able to be the better “mom.” In Mrs. Doubtfire (Chris Columbus, 1994) it is the wife who has neglected the kids because of her position as an executive in a design firm, yet the courts have awarded her custody of the children. The father is presented as “just wanting to have fun,” a big kid at heart. In perhaps the most hyperbolic form possible of parent bashing, Home Alone (Chris Columbus, 1990) presents viewers with the ridiculous scenario that parents had actually forgotten one of their children in the rush and confusion to visit relatives in another state. Such neglect points to actual cases where single working class moms have left their two year olds at home alone because they could not afford baby sitters. The question is not one of neglect, as much as it is one that is due to a desperate economic situation. The solution to the troubled household Sobchack argues, was provided by Spielberg’s E.T. (1982): an extraterrestrial became a surrogate dad—a transported and transformed father and friend to children of single parent households: the culturally-embraced phrase, “E.T. phone home” held a deep resonance for a patriarchy in distress.

Girlie Culture

To come back full circle, Tank Girl is an especially

44 The idea of Lacan’s notion of a “second death” can be found in Slavoj Zizek’s Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: the MIT Press, 1991), pp. 22-23. The film is scattered with the symbolism of the “living dead” and “lifeless women,” pushing it in the direction of the horror genre. Besides the dead body of Jamie, there is Tim’s “killing” of his sister’s doll by dropping it into the river from a bridge, and the “killing” of Ellie, Feck’s “girlfriend,” a blow-up sex doll at the end of the film.

45 What is rare is to attribute teenage anomic and evilness to some genetic defect (e.g., The Good Son [Joseph Rubin, 1993] starring Macaulay Culkin as Henry Evans, or Mickey [Dennis Dimster-Denk, 1992]) because it subverts the cultural faith in the inherent goodness of the child. More prevalent are possession films where the child is an empty vessel for the entry of evil (e.g., Richard Donner’s Omen, 1976; The Lost Boys, Joel Schumacher, 1987). A film like Junior (Dennis Dugan, 1990) makes more of the prank tendencies of childhood than dwelling on inherent evilness.


47 Sobchack writes, “Physically androgynous yet paternal in function, adult, wise, and wizened, yet an innocent, childish, little ‘wise guy’; technologically and personally powerful, yet a vulnerable little victim of circumstance—E.T. physically escapes traditional patriarchal form without yielding traditional patriarchal power, and thus is able to reside in (terrestrial) domestic space and serve as Elliot’s surrogate father” (p. 20).

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bothersome film for Boomer moralizers since it flies in the face of moral norms which characterize a discourse of nationalism obsessed with the rhetoric of a "national family," and the sanctity of its procreative capacities. The "motherland" collapses the home and country into a domestic theme. The metaphor of woman-as-nation presents the female personality as being chaste, dutiful and maternal.\(^48\) To produce such an image it becomes necessary to construct and promote a normative national subjectivity for young women (i.e., one of goodness and high morality). All kinds of coercive rhetorical tricks are mobilized to do this.\(^49\) Adolescent sexuality as surveyed and controlled by adult boomers is especially blind to the realities of teenage lifestyles. Sex education classes rarely discuss the dangers to adolescents caused by abusive adults. Films about teenagers written by adults such as House Party, Risky Business, Weird Science, Cooley High, rarely mention AIDS; contraceptives are almost never mentioned; pregnancy is rarely a fear; while lesbianism is virtually invisible. The main danger of sexuality emphasized in such films is the danger of being caught by adults, especially parents.\(^50\) While I am not advocating a return to some naive social realist aesthetic such exclusions need to be mentioned. Nostalgia reigns. The nostalgia for such a fictional past is projected by profamily themes of New Traditionalist advertising such as "the new morality," "the new abstinence," "the new femininity," "the new baby boom, and "the return to the good girl."\(^51\) The New Traditionalist ethos of nostalgic America directly links the idealized working mother to the idealized motherland. Good Housekeeping presented Barbara Bush as the ideal example of this New Traditionalist trend linking idealized images of women and families with patriotism and national pride. Barbara Bush is certainly not representative of the Boomer generation; however, she acts more in the capacity of a grandmother who is showing the way for Boomer stars like Sally Field and Diane Keaton who have also appeared on its cover. The nation signifies a home and its citizens as one gigantic family governed by benevolent patriarchs like the late Alan Bloom who was pessimistic about the possibility of youth ever being capable of exercising reason other than one wedded to their own self-interests.

Given this set of values the "girlie culture"\(^52\) is particularly upsetting because it also encompasses the worst nightmares of postfeminism. It presents a strata of women who are the very antithesis of patriotic idealism. In a review article on postfeminism in both American and Germanic contexts Der Spiegel\(^53\) identified these young women as "Emmas Töchter"—the daughters of emancipated woman. They are described as being strong, clever, egotistical, sensitive, self-confident, and very feminine; a good girl on the outside, but bad on the inside: "Lolitas who kick like Bruce Lee." "Not to be treated like a piece of shit," is the best advice she learnt from her mother, says Girlie-model Kate Moss. (Boys are said to be just the opposite: bad on the outside, good in the inside.) A picture in the article features a girl standing with her hand on her hips. On one side of her arm is written "witch," on the other, "slut." Emma

\(^{48}\) Mother's Day was created as a way of reuniting a divided nation after the U.S. Civil War (Thanks to an unknown reviewer for this insight!).

\(^{49}\) The Children's Defense Fund collapses HIV contagion with teen pregnancy. Both are equated as being amoral sexual practices so that restraint from sexual practice is insured; both are referred to as crisis conditions and epidemics. Sexuality and homosexuality are collapsed together metaphorically and literally with illness, crime, humiliation, poverty and death. See Loraine Kenny, "The Birds and the Bees: Teen Pregnancy and the Media," Afterimage 16, 1 (Summer 1988): 6-8. Another approach has been to use scare tactics about the risks of pregnancy and dangers of contraception in so-called abstinence-based curricula, more appropriately called "ante-sex curricula" by some. See Bonnie Trudell and Marianne H. Whatley, "Sex Respect: A Problematic School Sexuality Curriculum," Journal of Sex Education and Therapy 17, no. 2 (1991): 125-140. A further tactic in many textbooks used for adolescent sex education has been to include a photograph of a pregnant teenage girl after presenting "innocent" and "playful" images of teenagers: the "before" and "after" effects if abstinence is not practiced. See Marianne H. Whatley, "Keeping Adolescents in the Picture: Construction of Adolescent Sexuality in Textbook Images and Popular Films," in Sexual Cultures and the Construction of Adolescent Identities, ed. Janice M. Irvine (Philadelphia: Temple University Press), pp. 183-205.

\(^{50}\) Whatley, p. 191.


Töchter have their own magazines (e.g., Sassy in the US, Planet Pussy in Germany); their own style of dress—"girliewear," their own music—"Girlism"; their own stars (e.g., Madonna) and a comic, Tank Girl, (which has now been filmed). Magazines and books promote their slogans like: "Be a beast," "Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere," and "Get fit, get rich, get laid" (Madonna).

Postfeminist girls call themselves "girlies" or "babes." They are further identified as a generation 15-25 years old who demand equal wages for the same work, and believe that they have the same life chances to get ahead. They have accepted the achievements of feminism as a precondition for their own lifestyle. It is Hollywood's "Jazz Babes" who provide the "right stuff" for these girls, having made their careers from their "baby images": Barbara Stanwyck, Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, but also Holly Golightly of Breakfast at Tiffany's, Winona Ryder and Uma Thurman. What troubles the New Right is that such characters are appearing more and more in films and in children's television. The She-Ra doll began to appear in the mid-eighties competing with Barbie, and since 1992 "girlie action figures" have been introduced in Saturday morning television programs.

If the paternal superego is breaking down and the maternal superego is becoming more prevalent, it may well be that the symbolic law of the father is being replaced by rules of knowing how to succeed. The "girlie" lifestyle embraces the Madonna ego-ideal where it becomes important to know the rules of the game: how to manipulate people and the media, and how to assume a variety of changeable roles. As another interview said, "Madonna is able to have fun, sex, million dollars, and besides this her own mind, and besides this a shaven ass..." Her "girlie" followers radically conform to her lifestyle, yet paradoxically experience themselves as outlaws and rebels.

Violence in Perspective

The filmic biography of Tina Turner is a strong reminder that, despite her success, Turner was a victim of an abusive marriage. Violence remains largely a heterosexual male problem that is intimately tied up with sexual politics, the division of labor, and the social organization of sexuality and attraction. It is time to conclude this essay by putting societal violence in perspective. In this regard, Eleanor Lyon has some remarkable observations about the content of American televised violence. The startling conclusion she makes is that there is a contradictory relationship between simulated violence on prime time television and the "real" violence on the streets, in the homes, and in the institutions. Who commits violence on television and who are its victims are in disparate discord with daily news reports. Televised violence is initiated by predominantly white, middle-class males. Lyon's study showed that those classified as violently "good" were both female and upper class while those classified as violently "bad" tended to be lower class. Lyon also found that a larger percentage of upper-class females than upper-class males were violent. The number of non-white violent was far too small to make any sort of significant assessment in this analysis, however she notes, "there was not one 'good' Latino in the sample." Victimization was equally dramatic. The data on victims revealed that women and upper-class characters were disproportionately vulnerable to violence, especially upper-class women who were predominately "good" or "innocent victims." Lower-class characters (to a lesser extent men) were

54 Ibid., p. 116. Such an ideal ego is presented by 23 year-old cover girl model, Nadja Auermann, who comes across as a dangerous "big-city" Amazon: "the bombshell next door," a complete contrast to the supermodel Claudia Schiffer who is described by one 27 year-old interviewee as someone "who looks as she has been built by a man out of a child's construction kit."

55 The programs include: X-Men (which is misnamed since the new series features four women out of the eight X-Men who are disciples of the disabled Professor Xavier), Cadillacs and Dinosaurs, Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego? and the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. These shows feature buddy relationships between "girls" and the "boys"; heroes and heroines battle evil together.

56 Zizek, pp. 102-103.
more likely to be violents than victims who “deserve” violence because they were “bad.”

From this evidence Lyon draws several conclusions: First, there is a “virtual absence on television of minority members as both violents and victims” when it is well-known that “Black males have the highest victimization rates of any group. Further, the overwhelming majority of violent crimes is intraracial.”

Second, there is a disproportionate representation of the upper class as victims when the majority of known victims of violent crime come from the lower classes. Third, although family violence is pervasive, rarely are there any portrayals of wife battering and child abuse. Lyon’s final concern is with the over exaggerated dangers of violence. With the exception of family violence, the televised incidents usually ended in death whereas in reality threats of physical injury are more the case. Lyon concludes with,

Upper class violents are “good” characters, lower class violents are “bad.” Lower class victims are “bad,” and are likely to be killed, while upper class people are vulnerable, but not consequentially so. Women are more likely to be victimized by violence than to commit it, but their victimization is relatively harmless. Black, Latino and other minority group members are infrequently seen in violent incidents, but are seen more frequently as violents than as victims, thus removing them from public view as among the victims deserving sympathy and support. Family violence is infrequent and, when it occurs, is relatively without impact. Finally, television violence disproportionately leads to death.

Notwithstanding the methodological problems of her study, such results do suggest a paranoia by the middle-to-upper classes towards the lower classes; a similar paranoia is targeted at pornography by the Moral Right. In other words, there is a denial and a repression of the acknowledgment that the underclasses who are unable to attain “the good life” commit most of the serious crimes in America.

Lyon’s study of simulated screen violence points to the relationship of violence and power, a couplet which is overlaid by sex, age, race, and class privilege in a capitalist society. Symbolic violence is, therefore, an incarnation of unequal social relations, an indicator of the hegemonic struggle that is in process. John Fiske has explored how the clash of these popular symbolic violent bodies (heroes, heroines, villains, victims) are an incarnation of the “real” social body—the social relations of reproduction. Such violent images can be used in constructing social identities (i.e., as if relationships in the imagination, with the potential of becoming antagonistic relationships to the social order). For example, girlie culture constructs an as if relationship against patriarchy to gain some forms of psychological empowerment (resistance), even if they are not, “in reality” empowered. Such identifications of resistance remain threatening to the dominant culture since an articulation of resentment towards the social order that oppresses them is always possible.

Any change in the reproduction of the social imaginary can, therefore, have real effects. Fiske argues that the desire for violence needs to be understood within the context of a growing gap between the privileged and the deprived which has increased since Reaganomic capitalism came into being. The axes along which violence is understood in any specific location depends on a particular combination of class, sex/gender, age, and race. Not all these vectors may apply equally. For example, with girlie culture, age and gender are of central importance. As this essay of Pennsylvania’s Annenberg School for Communication which has continued its Cultural Indicators project (CI) since 1967. For a comparative analysis see George Gerbner’s “Television Violence: The Power and the Peril,” pp. 551-552.

has argued, Generation X, which itself is splintered into various locations of class, race, and sex/gender, is a special focus of the New Right's efforts to maintain and reproduce the social imaginary by delegitimating, regulating, repressing, or cajoling the youthful "bottom-up" culture. The taste for symbolic violence by Generation X culture comes from the social position they find themselves in—a subordinated position where there is a denial of the rewards (the American Dream of modernism) that the dominant rhetoric after the Second World War had promised them as their inherited right. This has resulted in a strange alliance between the capitalist commodification of youth culture and youths poaching this very commodified culture as forms of resistance for their own ends, as demonstrated, for instance, in their '50s antinostalgia films. The best way to reduce both physical and symbolic violence in today's postmodern society is, therefore, not to censor it, nor to introduce more "quality" programs (ersatz for educational programs); nor is it to moralize and rail against such images, rather the best way is to change the social conditions that produce the desire for its taste. In other words, the gap of privilege has to close if violence is to decrease and the moral panic is exposed for what it hides: namely the fear that those who are now privileged may stand to lose their status. On the very day that I end this essay, French youths are violently clashing with police in the poorest districts of Paris. The government's response has been to blame these disturbances on incoming American broadcasts of television violence. Their solution: introduce the V-chip technology into every television set in France!

64 The refinement of such an argument can be found in the writings of Paul Willis, especially his Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990) where he develops the idea of "symbolic work" as creatively expressed by today's youth. Dick Hebdige's Subculture: The Meaning of Style (London: Methuen, 1979) is an early precursor of the same argument. Youth's appropriation of material culture reveals a dramatic "refusal," a stylized repudiation of adult culture that "in spectacular fashion (signals) the breakdown in consensus in the post-war period" (p. 17). As part of the New Left, his thesis is an obvious challenge to the Frankfurt School of cultural analysis. A similar argument can be found from a broader perspective in Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life. Trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1984).

65 As reported on the CBC News, 20 February 1996.
has argued, Generation X, which itself is splintered into various locations of class, race, and sex/gender, is a special focus of the New Right's efforts to maintain and reproduce the social imaginary by delegitimating, regulating, repressing, or cajoling the youthful "bottom-up" culture. The taste for symbolic violence by Generation X culture comes from the social position they find themselves in—a subordinated position where there is a denial of the rewards (the American Dream of modernism) that the dominant rhetoric after the Second World War had promised them as their inherited right. This has resulted in a strange alliance between the capitalist commodification of youth culture and youths poaching this very commodified culture as forms of resistance for their own ends, as demonstrated, for instance, in their '50s antinostalgia films.64 The best way to reduce both physical and symbolic violence in today's postmodern society is, therefore, not to censor it, nor to introduce more "quality" programs (ersatz for educational programs); nor is it to moralize and rail against such images, rather the best way is to change the social conditions that produce the desire for its taste. In other words, the gap of privilege has to close if violence is to decrease and the moral panic is exposed for what it hides: namely the fear that those who are now privileged may stand to lose their status. On the very day that I end this essay, French youths are violently clashing with police in the poorest districts of Paris.65 The government's response has been to blame these disturbances on incoming American broadcasts of television violence. Their solution: introduce the V-chip technology into every television set in France!

64 The refinement of such an argument can be found in the writings of Paul Willis, especially his Common Culture: Symbolic Work at Play in the Everyday Cultures of the Young (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1990) where he develops the idea of "symbolic work" as creatively expressed by today's youth. Dick Hebdige's Subculture: The Meaning of Style ((London: Methuen, 1979) is an early precursor of the same argument. Youth's appropriation of material culture reveals a dramatic "refusal," a stylized repudiation of adult culture that "in spectacular fashion (signals) the breakdown in consensus in the post-war period" (p. 17). As part of the New Left, his thesis is an obvious challenge to the Frankfurt School of cultural analysis. A similar argument can be found from a broader perspective in Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life. Trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1984).

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The Clash Between Sacred and Profane: Controversial Art and Religion in the Postmodern Era

Rosalie H. Politsky

Abstract

Using mythic criticism, this paper examines the current cultural and religious instability that may serve as the impetus for the appropriation of ancient religious myths and symbols by various visual and performance artists. The paper concludes with implications of ritual, personal mythology, and controversial art for art education.

The Appropriation of Religious Rituals and Symbols in Controversial Art

Durkheim describes the sacred as transcendental and extraordinary, inspiring love, awe, and sometimes, dread (Dubin, 1992, p. 80). The profane, on the other hand, is instrumental and mundane. But the traditional boundaries between the sacred and the profane are breaking down. In appropriating traditional religious imagery and symbols, contemporary artists have
pushed the boundaries of both aesthetic and religious sensibilities.

Controversial art is difficult to define, since Western art and popular culture have been preoccupied with nudity (Schneemann, 1991). But according to Lankford and Pankratz, (1992), controversial art has recently become a categorical term. This paper will define offensive art as artistic acts or images that are judged to be immoral, obscene, lewd, distasteful, or blasphemous in nature. It also refers to art that is perceived as an attack of taken-for-granted moral sensibilities (Veith, 1994). Such images become controversial because they are deemed to break the "general standards of decency" (p. 17).

I have used McEvilley's (1983) discussion of controversial art elsewhere (Politsky, 1995a), and will review his categories, as well as the work of Lippard (1983), to illustrate instances of shamanic rituals and religious appropriation in performance art. McEvilley in particular acknowledges that many of the artists he discusses feel that shamanic material and traditional rituals, as well as Freudian and Jungian influences, serve as the cultural parallels for their work (p. 66). He refers to the following performances as, "Art in the Dark" (McEvilley, p. 62).

**Rituals of Divinization**

Some performances reflect ancient rituals of divinization. For instance, McCarthy cut his hands and mixed his blood with water and food, making explicit the sacramental rites from the Dionysian to the Christian (McEvilley, p. 66). The OM (1960s) ritual of Nitsch, appropriated ancient rituals of divinization by disemboweling a bull and covering the participants with the bull's blood (p. 65). Lippard (1983) describes the consumption of the dead one's powers as a metaphysical idea later adapted to the Christian Mass (pp. 46, 175).

**Shamanic Rituals of Self-Mutilation**

While self-injury and self-mutilation have been essential practices in many shamanic traditions, these actions tend to be the most shocking. Kim Jones and Chris Burden have engaged in rather bizarre performances involving self-injury. Jones, for example, cut himself 27 times with a razor in a pattern resembling the circulatory system. Burden, in a piece called *Movie on the Way Down* (1973), hung naked by his feet (McEvilley, p. 66). Such actions parallel ascetic rituals in which shamans cut themselves while in ecstatic states. Lippard (1983) suggests that some artists have also combined feminism and ecology with mutilation in order to emphasize the victimization of women and the earth (p. 52). Stephen Whisler's, *Plant Work #2* (1977), for instance, expresses the classic nature/culture split by cutting a v-shape in the "crotch" of a tree and "sharing the pain" by bleeding into it (p. 192).

**Rituals of Androgyny and Union with the Goddess**

McEvilley views McCarthy’s performances as parallel to various tribal rites in which men mime female menstruation and parturition. Female imitation, as found in the works of Brus and McCarthy, is also a standard shamanic motif. Brus made a vulva-like incision in his groin and held it open with hooks (McEvilley, p. 66). In *Old Man in My Doctor* (1978), McCarthy wore a rubber mask over his head to form a vagina-shaped opening and gave birth to a ketchup covered doll (p. 66).

**Taboo Acts to Draw Away Societal Contempt**

The performance of taboo acts has its roots in ancient religious custom and is also central to shamanism. Shamans engage in practices that bring about contempt from others by conducting themselves in offensive and unconventional ways. McEvilley suggests that performance artists who break gender, sexual, or cultural norms are replicating this ancient shaman custom. Lankford and Pankratz (1992) cite how Mapplethorpe's and Serrano's art works were used to outrage and shock. These artists may be viewed as taking on the role of shamans who acted as scapegoats by drawing calamity away from the communities they served.
The Cultural and Religious Instability Behind Controversial Art

Many view the appropriation of religious content as scandalous and even blasphemous. Yet, such deleterious consequences have not stopped artists from appropriating traditional religious symbols and imagery. Why is such appropriation occurring? Part of the answer can be traced to the development of postmodern ideology. Modernist art criticism has focused on the aesthetic object and ignored its religious or socio-political dimensions (Stuhr, 1994). But controversial art has pushed these dimensions to the forefront.

Art Education and Religious Concerns

The currents of postmodern times are turbulent. Hargreaves (1995) summarizes the paradoxes of the postmodern age by stating, “We live in exhilarating and terrifying times ... [and] heightened moral uncertainty” (p. 14). The unified world of formalism has given way to pluralism and critical discourse. Now, religion and spirituality are brought to the forefront in critical discourse. Art educators have responded likewise. Cahan and Kocur (1994), for instance, describe how they are concerned with “unearthing the spirituality buried in contemporary secular existence. Our works are both political and spiritual, syncretizing traditional African, Judeo-Christian, and Eastern religions, mythologies, and cosmologies, forming a synthesis of cross-cultural references” (p. 27). Dubin (1992) refers to the religious based controversies as “spiritual tests” (pp. 79-101). At a time when artists alter old religious symbols or substitute new ones, others attempt to protect and restore long-established religious symbols (p. 80).

The purpose of this paper, then, is to investigate the cultural forces that have encouraged this type of artistic expression. My intent is to delve into the cultural and religious instability of the postmodern era, which I believe has provided some of the impetus for controversial art. I will focus on the Christian religion which includes Roman Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical Christianity.

The Absence of “Presence” and the Loss of Transcendental Signifiers

Modernism centers around notions of “presence” made visible though works of art. It also concerns itself with the
ability of individuals to find meanings by way of universal mental operations. However, Saussure (1857-1913) questioned these assumptions and argued that meaning in language is just a matter of difference. Saussure’s followers suggested that if one wants to know the meaning (or signified) of a signifier (sound/image) the dictionary supplies merely more signifiers (Eagleton, 1983). Thus, the process of meaning is infinite, circular, and less stable than what structuralists had believed.

Furthermore, Western philosophers have been logocentric. They have been committed to a belief that there is some ultimate word, presence, essence, truth, or reality which acts as the foundation of all our thought and experience. Western philosophy has yearned for the sign which will give meaning to all others—the transcendental signifier—the unquestionable meaning to which all other signs can be said to point; for example, God, the Self, the essence, and so on. However, Derrida labels as metaphysical any such thought system that depends on a first principle or impeccable ground upon which a whole hierarchy of meaning may be constructed. Such transcendental meaning (Self, God, Idea, etc.) is a fiction embroiled in an open-ended play of signification. Thus, if there is no transcendental “logos,” then it follows that there can be no absolutes, no meaning apart from human culture (Veith, 1994).

**Loss of a Common Culture and Common Iconography**

Art educator, Ralph Smith (1976) suggests that contemporary alienation is a result of a detachment from a common iconography of compelling images that make visible the invisible world of the spirit (p. 9). The cultural transformation we are undergoing is dramatic and more thorough than in the past. Contemporary culture, Smith insists, is both image-confused, and value-confused.

In relation to art education, Kerry Freedman (1994) asserts that the promotion of Western models of aesthetic value has maintained the assumption of a “common” culture (p. 161). “Western” is used here to denote the Euro-American (Erickson, 1994), dominant White culture of the fine Art World (Stuhr, 1994). But a definition of contemporary Western art is problematic (Dufrene, 1994) in the postmodern era since contemporary visual culture is so continually fragmented and in flux that there is little that is common about “common” culture (Freedman, 1994, p. 161). Postmodernism fragments society into contending, unintelligible subcultures (Veith, 1994, p. 144). This fragmentation results in a “loss of a comprehensive worldview” (Veith, 1994, p. 139). In addition, multiculturalism results in the leveling of cultures and the exaggeration of differences.

Burgin (1986) proposes that the decline of universal religion, defined as traditional Christianity, has undermined cultural stability, making the creation of common religious symbols and images difficult to acquire. Religion has become displaced, and is no longer the center of contemporary life (p. 36). Because of the interrelationship between religious and cultural values, the lack of common religious symbols significantly fractures the culture at large.

**The Loss of Art as a Source of Knowledge**

The emergence of a pluralistic avant-garde has dealt a serious epistemological blow to viewers and has aggravated the lack of a common iconography. Arnold (1979) proposes that during the 1950s a series of American avant-garde movements supplanted one another in succession. But the 1960s saw the emergence of a pluralistic avant-garde. Because of its rapid pace, Arnold speculates that people failed to comprehend the meaning of contemporary art and may have cut themselves off from important sources of knowledge.

While pacing is one barrier, complexity is yet another. The avant-garde not only pushes the boundaries of acceptability and perception, it also challenges our basic ideas about the nature of art and its relationship to life. The avant-garde art opens the possibility that anything can be art and art can be everything.
The Loss of Human Sexuality and the Goddess Mythology

Lippard (1983) employs mythical criticism and combines Jungian psychology with feminism. Artists and educators in the postmodern era have sought to recover the goddess in patriarchal cultures and religions. They have disputed the notion that male dominance has existed "everywhere and forever" (Collins, 1995).

Lippard's work represents a mediation between modernism and postmodernism. Instances of modernists' assumptions include the use of the metaphors of woman as nature, the Great Goddess and Mother Earth. However, her work is also instrumental in illustrating postmodernist, feminist concerns. Lippard suggests that contemporary artists' renewed interest in natural processes can be traced to a prevalent anxiety of loss over our rural/matriarchal, sexual connection. Many women artists relate their cultural creativity to their natural creativity and explicitly link their art and their bodies (pp. 46-47). Moreover, the abyss between nature (associated with woman) and culture (associated with man) was officially sanctioned by Christianity which displays a "deeply anti-natural bias and a brutal severing of spirit from matter" (Lippard, 1983, p. 46). Lippard gives many examples of how Christianity absorbed or disguised "pagan" matriarchal images.

Postmodernism and the Current Religious Crisis

There are theorists from diverse fields who construe the cultural crisis as a religious crisis. Researchers in theology (e.g., Wallis, 1995; Fox, 1994, 1988; Harpur, 1987; Moore, 1992; Griffin, Beardslee & Holland, 1989), in cultural and mythological studies (e.g., Flowers, 1988; Feinstein & Krippner, 1988), and in history (e.g., Hobsbawn, 1996) suggest that America is culturally, politically, and spiritually bankrupt.

Harpur (1987) claims that there is a great majority of people today for whom the Christian faith makes "little sense at all" (p. 5). While Christianity is thriving in parts of Africa and Asia, it is rapidly eroding in the West. While traditional Christian churches have suffered drastic loses, the Roman Catholic Church has been the hardest hit. Roughly 55% avoid the church, and the new recruits of nuns and priests has declined sharply. In Canada, less than 30% attend church. Hence, some theologians now speak of "the post-Christian Era" (p. 6). Harpur claims that the traditional dogmas about Jesus are becoming more and more incomprehensible for many people.

Veith (1994) asserts that while liberal churches seem to wither, conservative and evangelical Christian churches flourish. These churches, Veith asserts, have sold out to popular culture and consumerism of the "McChurch" (Veith, p. 213). Churches resemble malls or theme parks, Veith argues. The Crystal Cathedral is like a religious theme park with babbling brooks, luxuriant plant life and multimedia overload. "Christians, like everyone else in today's economy are consumers" (p. 118). More importantly, Harpur (1987) fears the apparent hostility and absolutism in the conservative evangelical view.

Theologians acknowledge the intense anxiety that the collapse and disintegration of modernism evoke (Sweet, 1990). Anderson (1992) and Veith (1994) discuss the particular trauma that postmodernism has had upon Christian thought and practice. While Veith's book focuses on evangelical Christians, his analysis includes Roman Catholics and Protestants as well. Common to these Christian critiques is the loss of moral absolutes. "The postmodern consciousness seems to make possible either a new radicalism or a new conservatism" (Veith, p. 24). Postmodernism emphasizes speaking in one's own voice and legitimates pluralism and the destruction of the foundations (Veith, pp. 220 & 225). The essence of postmodernism is "anti-foundational" (p. 226). Postmodernism seeks to live with chaos and avoids foundational judgments altogether.

A Theology of Hostility

Harpur (1987) describes the rigidity, absolutism, hostility, isolation, and defensiveness in the fundamentalist-style religion of the extreme conservative evangelicals, the Roman Catholic fundamentalism of John Paul II, and Islamic fundamentalism
xi). He believes that the conservative evangelicals have set stumbling blocks in front of the World Council of Churches who seek to form a dialogue between Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhist, Jews, and others. Instead of seeing these religions as part of the entire completeness of the human spiritual quest, the conservative evangelicals stress a commitment to dogmatic intolerance of pluralism and tolerance (p. 14). Also inherent in this theology is male chauvinist ideology.

This conservative theology is more likely to divide life into the sacred-profane, body-soul dichotomy that is very visible today, especially in the Roman Catholic Church with its obsession about celibacy, divorce, sexuality, and the ordination of women (Harpur, p. 66). In light of these developments, institutionalized religion has obliterated the original mythos of Jesus, who never thought of himself as the high priest with special privileges of wealth, power, and prestige, but as healer, teacher, prophet and master to the oppressed, the marginalized and the poor (p. 67).

**America's Cultural Mythic Crisis**

Myths, according to Joseph Campbell, bring us to a spiritual level of consciousness (Flowers, 1988, p. 14). The term, spiritual is not bound to the dogmas of any particular religion, but is the search for meaning that transcends religion and superficial worship (Politsky, 1995a, p. 111). Feinstein and Krippner (1988) suggest that the long-enduring myths have crumbled under the weight of abrupt shifts in the very foundations of social organizations, and that cultural myths have been drifting toward obsolescence (p. 6). Campbell believes that we either experience ourselves living in a demythologized world, or we experience confusion over the many competing mythologies with adherents from diverse backgrounds (Flowers, 1988, p. 9).

**America's Collective Shadow**

Fox (1994), a Catholic theologian, identifies the current crisis as a soul crisis of the entire soul of the nation. We lack a cosmology, a sense of universe as home, and thus, a sense of ecology. Ecology derives from the Greek ἐικός or home (p. 48). The crisis of our country is caused by our collective shadow which is the neglect of mystical thinking. Artists, Fox claims, "awaken our images in order to take us to our mystical origins" (p. 207). Myth and ritual take us to deeper levels of our being, but ritual is also a great threat to the guardians of the machine civilization. Without ritual and rites of passage a civilization is sick and loses its soul. "In the case of poverty of ritual, our culture and its religions are sinning grievously against justice and the right of the new generation of humans to experience effective ritual and participate in ritual making" (Fox, p. 265).

**The Underlying Spiritual Crisis**

Wallis (1995), in critiquing his own Evangelical Church, describes the cultural, political and spiritual bankruptcy. At the root of the brutality of violence, poverty, white racism, homophobia, discrimination against women, the rape of the earth, and the general loss of meaning and hope, is a profoundly moral and spiritual crisis (pp. 4-9). Recognizing that there are diverse and pluralist expressions of religion and religiosity, Wallis admonishes the two extremes. On one hand, "he refuses to allow the religious right to have a monopoly on morality and spirituality" (p. xi). On the other hand, he accuses liberal religion of losing its center by becoming more bureaucratic than spiritual (p. 44).

**A Thirst for the Spiritual**

Finally, Veith (1994) contends that while modernism sought to divest itself of religion, postmodernism draws from the most ancient religions and spiritualities. The New Age movement, with its affinities to Hinduism and Buddhism, has grown rapidly and is an indication of the contemporary thirst for both pluralism and spirituality (pp. 198-199). Jung observed the disintegration of Christianity and speculated that Westerners would attempt to adapt Eastern religious modes (Stevens, 1983, pp. 286-287). Wallis (1995) acknowledges that while the New Age movement is sometimes shallow, it nevertheless indicates the cultural hunger for spiritual experiences. Watts (1971) also noted that
the presence of all kinds of small mystical and pseudo-mystical groups attests to this type of cultural confusion.

Conclusion

Harding (1961, p. 5) asserts that when a religion becomes weak or dies, the spirit which informed these venerable symbols will only manifest itself somewhere else under some other form. During this period of the loss of symbols and the corresponding hunger for affirming, regenerative myths and symbols, it follows that artists may attempt to become vehicles of transition and transformation. However, these controversial artistic activities are hardly cut clear. Many people wonder if controversial art is a sign of healing or a manifestation of pathology.

From Functionalism to Radical Humanism

A description of the paradigm shift from functionalism to radical humanism puts these opposing views in context (Burrell and Morgan, 1985). The paradigm shift included a movement away from the unifying effect of the aesthetic experience that is reflective of a private aesthetic, toward a public aesthetic which challenges the status quo and deliberately seeks to transform individual and collective consciousness. From this perspective, the artists discussed in this paper may be acting as social reformers rather than as psychotics or tricksters. Rather than anarchic aesthetic turbulence, we can view their work as the consciousness raising of a symbol deficient collective.

From Collective to Personal Mythology

Campbell asserts that Americans are not well acquainted with the literature of the spirit (Flowers, 1988). Over the centuries, religions used the power of the myth to illuminate deep inner problems, inner mysteries and inner passages (pp. 3-4). Because modern people crave fresh rituals, Feinstein and Krippner (1988) perceive a growing number of individuals and communities acting as their own “inner Shamans” by attempting to rediscover ancient ceremonies and rituals (pp. 13 & 17). By appropriating religious imagery, the artists mentioned here, may have taken on the role of the shaman to reanimate the original power, awe, and fascination of the archetypes; that is, forms or images of a collective nature (Heaney, p. 144).

Constructive or Revisionary Postmodernism

Sullivan (1993) argues that there are different views of postmodernism. One view emphasizes the negative and nihilistic elements of contemporary life and forms a destructive postmodernism (p. 10). Constructive or revisionary postmodernism, on the other hand, seeks a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts (Griffin, 1989, p. xii). The latter view supports ecology, peace, feminism, and other emancipatory movements, as well as a postmodern global order (p. xiii). However, both views share the common notion that the belief systems that supported modernity are obsolete. Meaning is socially constructed, open to multiple interpretations (Sullivan, pp. 10-11). Most importantly, constructive postmodern thought perceives modernity as socially and spiritually destructive (Griffin & Beardslee, 1989, p. xiii).

In defining structures and in seeking a sense of meaning and a sense of connection, controversial art parallels constructive postmodern practice. However, I also recognize that the proclamations of underlying or universal principles are alien to postmodern thought. Therefore, we must approach controversial art from various perspectives.

Contrary to this alleged transformative and healing effect (Politsky, 1995a), controversial art also possesses an enigmatic, paradoxical, and regressive nature as well. To the conservative, such offensive art appears to drive an even deadlier division between the sacred and profane. Many religious conservatives view the return to ancient religious rituals as terribly misguided and regressive. This latter judgment marks the real paradox of controversial visual and performance art. Its offensiveness and sometimes vileness flies in the face of the underlying assumptions of Greenburg’s modernism; namely, that the “artist,” by virtue of special gifts, expresses the “finest in humanity”—the essence.
of civilization (Burgin, 1986, p. 30). Ultimately, however, controversial art will defy categorization.

Implications for Art Education

Art educators have contended with controversial art in various ways. Barrett and Rab (1990) took twelve high school seniors to view the Mapplethorpe exhibition. These researchers concluded that the exhibition provided their students with new kinds of knowledge and understanding about cultural differences. Lankford and Pankratz (1992) analyzed key concepts found in arguments surrounding controversial art including the concept of art, and the relationship between art, morality and artistic freedom. Both sets of researchers concluded that controversial art provided opportunities to confront important issues about the nature of art and exposed viewers to subcultures that are part of our society.

Multiculturalism and the Politics of Difference

Barrett (1994) notes that the first step in dealing with the cultural disputes over controversial art is a "cease-fire." This step is important since it gives all participants the right to speak, and more importantly, to listen (p. 5). Multiculturalism may provide the means to approach the complex issues raised in controversial art. Cahan and Kocur (1994) suggest that multicultural education can address the sensitive issues raised in contemporary art. Barrett concludes that, "We would advertise broadly to our public constituencies that artistic expressions are often at the forefront of social conflicts; thus, they have a very special import in society" (p. 5). The following suggestions are part of the cease fire negotiations.

Developing Our Own Personal Mythology

Campbell believes that children make up their own myths (Flowers, 1988). Their innovative rites include graffiti, gang membership, and their own initiations. He also suggests that we read myths, and not only our own but other people’s myths since we tend to interpret our own myths as facts (p. 6). Art educators also need to labor intensely to discover our own guiding symbols and myths (Politsky, 1995b) and help our students to do likewise.

Aesthetic Pluralism

Danto’s theory goes beyond formalist criteria. Teachers and students must bring knowledge to the work in order to respond to it. Understanding is not static but is constructed. We are encouraged to look at art in relation to aesthetic theory, cultural, and historical contexts (Wolcott, 1996, p. 17). Hart (1991) suggests that each art form has its own set of standards, and that no one universal aesthetic can apply to all art forms (p. 150). It follows that art educators must be aware of distinct religious and aesthetic systems, particularly in ritual art that is based on religion and mythic themes. Rituals are very complex and are bound up with specific histories, traditions and mythologies.

Content and Issue-centered Art Education

Controversial art presents an opportunity to go beyond purely formalist concerns. Postmodern art deals with issues and content rather than form. Controversial art explores issues such as sexuality and gender explicitly. Wolcott (1996) asserts that contemporary artists, "confront us with issues that are sometimes difficult to deal with and not always easy to understand. Therefore, if art educators select such works of art to be used in the classroom, they must present them in a more studied context” (p. 75).

Sexual Politics and Social Reconstruction

An important aspect of multiculturalism is social reconstruction. This approach to teaching art challenges educational and social inequities, promotes appreciation and diversity, and encourages students to take action against social
structural inequities (Tomhave, 1992; Cahan & Kocur, 1994). Delacruz (1995) maintains that the eradication of racism, sexism, homophobia, and prejudice is part of educational reform based on more authentic knowledge and the pedagogy of liberation and social responsibility (p. 61). Scholars and educators have only begun to explore the relationship between homosexuality and art education. Eaton (1988) asserts that art educators need to study modern sexual theories. Honeychurch (1995) suggests that art educators need to push the dominant culture to examine its homophobia and the ideological and political systems that surround this fear. Finally, the reconstruction enables the emergence of a “new iconography of empowerment being evolved by women and minorities” (Fehr, 1994, p. 211). Fehr claims that as these groups gain access to the mainstream, their new images will penetrate social consciousness.

Religious Studies and Spiritual Explorations

In addition to social censorship, art educators need to study how the Church, both Catholic and Protestant, has inhibited examination of controversial art (Eaton, 1988, p. 318). However, other religions must also be studied since, as Delacruz (1995) and Dubin (1992) have recognized, racial and religious tensions are becoming more pronounced with the emergence of global awareness and multicultural conflicts. Barrett (1994) describes how pervasive these “culture wars” have become and cites controversies among Islamic fundamentalists and Muslims (p. 4). Barrett suggests that deeply rooted religious concerns are fundamental to these culture wars.

Certain religious symbols have enormous power and significance for some. Others, who are more open to a variety of interpretations, take a more critical approach (Dubin, p. 101). For example, Stinespring (1990), examined the relationship of fundamentalist religion upon the practical aspects of teaching art. His position is that the most important principle of education in a democratic society is the free flow of ideas. Fundamentalists, with a narrow definition of truth, cannot allow to close down areas of inquiry. Furthermore, instructors should resist efforts of those students who plead religious objections to shield themselves and others from information intended to broaden their bases of knowledge (p. 53). The spiritual aspects of art are also recognized by Garber (1995) as an important element in teaching about culture. Chalmers (1981) and Rogers (1988) have pointed out the need to understand which functions and roles of art are important to our students. This would certainly include religious and spiritual functions as well (Chalmers, 1981, p. 11).

Feminism and Spirituality

Wallis (1995) calls “prophetic feminism” the intertwining of spirituality and politics. The demands of feminism are too extensive to be satisfied with a few adjustments. “Its actualization demands conversion and conversion is always a spiritual issue requiring spiritual force” (p. 148). Schussler Fiorenza (1984) seeks to construct heuristic models to write women back into early Christianity. She asserts that androcentric Western language and patriarchal religion have “erased” women from biblical discourse (p. xviii). A feminist reconstruction of Judaism and early Christianity can recover the goddess images that patriarchal Judaism extirpated (p. 106).

Modern Axiological Project

Wallis (1995) states that we are “suffering from a profound erosion of moral values” (p. 156). At the roots of this crisis is American overconsumption and our wounded relationship with the earth. The crisis of value calls for a well established modern axiological project (Fekete, 1987). Feldman (1996) has acknowledged the clash of values in art education over religion, sex and gender, class, and race. Stuhr, Krug, and Scott (1995) propose that multicultural education poses critical, moral and ethical questions.

The Development of Critical Thinking

The examination of values enhance the development of critical thinking skills in art criticism. Because of political attacks upon the photographs of Mapplethorpe and Serrano, Lucy Lippard promotes critical thinking for the ordinary person
Politsky

Protestors, who are often dualistic thinkers, view topics such as mythology, pagan cultures, the supernatural, the occult, homosexuals, and women in non-traditional roles as "wrong" (Rogers, 1988, pp. 6-7).

One way to address dualistic thinking is to move from an objectivist orientation to a contextual orientation (Ettinger, 1990). This latter view maintains that knowledge about art is socially constructed and that there are multiple interpretations which include sociological, personal, and symbolic dimensions. When our approach encourages alternative views, students are more likely to be actively involved and take personal responsibility for their learning (Ettinger, 1990, p. 39). Lankford and Pankratz (1992) also hold to the importance of equipping students with critical thinking skills by providing forums for the exchange of contrasting ideas that promote reflective dialogue (p. 24).

Summary

I have attempted to make a case for the potential healing and transformative effect of some controversial art. In the past, religious dogmas and rituals reflected the working of the unconscious and protected the believer from the powerful contents of the unconscious. But contemporary Western culture has lost these psychic buffers. Taboo acts, as represented in visual and performance art, may act as a vehicle for keeping in check the shadow reality of a particular culture. Jung used the concept of the collective shadow to refer to those qualities neglected or rejected by a particular culture (Jacobi, 1967). Thus, dark refers to the Jungian notion of the shadow. It refers to material that is either unconscious or rejected in the individual or the culture. Cultural imperialism and hegemony usually result in the repression of collective psychic energy. When this oppression occurs, the dark, rejected material tends to be expressed in a more blatant, bizarre, and often violent forms. Within a symbol impoverished culture, controversial art may act as a regressive yet transformative movement into the depths of the psyche in order to reactivate the awe and fascination of the archetypes that are made manifest within ancient symbols, myths, and rituals.

References


Editor's Note:
Social Action through Art

Karen T. Keifer-Boyod

Many artists now conceive their roles with a different sense of purpose than current aesthetic models sanction, even though there is yet no comprehensive theory or framework to encompass what they are doing. . . . A more participatory, socially interactive framework for art [is emerging]. . . . [This] new paradigm thinking involves a significant shift from objects to relationships. (Gablik, 1991, p. 7)

Continuing the tradition, begun with JSTAE 14, The Gallery features visual research, actions, and art that contribute to social change. Nine artists/activists/art educators, many serving as facilitators of projects involving diverse communities, have contributed images for The Gallery. The images direct our attention to issues of racism, exploitation, intolerance, war, world relations, joblessness, homelessness, a damaged infrastructure, women's health, equal rights, and peace.

I thank Elizabeth Hoffman, Don Krug, and the artists for writing descriptions to accompany the images. One image may communicate more than a treatise of words, but the descriptions help us to understand the context of these images. They represent actions situated in an experience.


Editor's Note:
Social Action through Art

Karen T. Keifer-Boyd

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I thank Elizabeth Hoffman, Don Krug, and the artists for writing descriptions to accompany the images. One image may communicate more than a treatise of words, but the descriptions help us to understand the context of these images. They represent actions situated in an experience.
Even the more personal experiences have global ramifications. Joan Bonnette creates torsos from her own body and then scars them with the wounds from her mother's surgeries. She honors her mother's endurance for over 25 years as she continues to survive the attack of cancer. What is this cancer that is ravaging so many humans? Not one of us can isolate ourselves from this destruction. Both my parents have cancer. My dear friend who received his doctorate with me died recently of cancer. This imbalance in our bodies is life threatening. The chemicals we have placed in our food, air, and water are the likely agents that activate the carcinesous monopoly. Bonnette's image of endurance and survival, also evokes a message that cancer affects us all. While cancer research may make medical breakthroughs we must suspect what we eat, breathe, and drink—and perhaps make changes in our daily consumption.

In the 1980s I worked for Eugene, Oregon's, Council for Human Rights in Latin America. Since then I have introduced Chilean Arpilleras in art lessons about transformative power or social action through art. Each semester as I introduce non-art majors to the arpilleras and ask them to create an artwork that presents a social or personal injustice that they have experienced, (using the "scraps of life" that surround them), many express surprise that art can serve such a purpose. One woman asked, "you mean I can communicate my views on breastfeeding through art?" Another was concerned that her view that women should be allowed to read the Torah was not an "art" topic. When we discussed their art and the controversial issues that the art expressed ranging from abortion, to legalization of marijuana, to gun control, child abuse, and society "as puppets of the clock"; there were tears, opposing opinions, and engaging discussion. I asked in the midst of the passion: "Should discussion such as we are having be a part of art education?" They answered with a unanimous, YES!" These elementary education majors who were taking the required art class as part of their teaching certification program, many of whom will be in schools without art specialists, felt that the dialogue that their images stimulated was educational, necessary, and helped them to examine the social role of art. As Suzi Gablik writes: "Vision is not purely cognitive or purely aesthetic but vision is a social practice" (1991, p. 100). The JSTAE Gallery presents art as a social practice.

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Since the early 1980s, members of the Boise Peace Quilt Project have been making quilts to promote world peace and to honor peace activists. Strategies using quilts as vehicles for peace making include cross-cultural collaborations, educational seminars, award ceremonies, and even the circulation of a quilt among U.S. senators who were asked to sleep one night under the quilt, dream of peace, and in the morning act towards peace through their political action on the Senate floor.

Elizabeth Hoffman

Sanctuary Quilt  January, 1988 By: Boise Peace Quilt Project

The Sanctuary Quilt focuses on the struggle for freedom in Central America and honors churches and communities in North America who have provided sanctuary for refugees. The images on the quilt reflect the horror of political conflict, the sadness of leaving native landscapes, and the hope of finding peace in North American communities offering sanctuary.
By All Means Necessary was created in the summer of 1992 by a team of 14 teens working with artists, Olivia Gude, Dorian Sylvain, and Turbado Marabou. The challenge to the youth was simple and direct, "Here is your wall. Your mission is to image for the community the issues that you face, that the community as a whole faces." In an intensive six-week process, we discussed, meditated, researched, drew, re-drew, projected, and painted together. The title, a tribute and a reflection on the famous words of Malcolm X came about because one day one of the students threw up his hands during a group discussion and exclaimed, "There's no one way to look at things. Every time I think one thing, someone makes me also see it another way." We save ourselves and the community by multiple understandings and actions, "by all means necessary."
News reports, the Internet, and photographs awakened memories of the 1975 International Women's Day march in New York City. This photograph connects people and their beliefs through 20 years.
The spirit and optimism of my mother in her 25 year endurance of breast cancer is the basis of ENDURA. At age 87, she is a fighter and still likes to tie a red sash around her blouse and to put on lipstick and a little perfume when visitors are expected. Bless her endurance and cancer research!
The collage represents my strong opposition to the current rise in Hindu fundamentalism in India. I focus on the direct relationship between Hindu and Muslim labourers in today's world economy. This relationship is totally dismissed in fundamentalist discourse.
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Pillars of Salt  1990  By: Vaughn Clay  
mixed paints: acrylics, oils, & spray; H70"xW108"xD8"

*Pillars of Salt* comments on the 1990 Persian Gulf War between the USA and Iraq. Images from ancient Assyrian art are mixed with modern war imagery. The central figure refers to the Biblical story and symbolizes that war, anger, and greed can turn us all into pillars of salt.
Homeless Collage 1993 By: Robert Bersson
collage; 11"x9"

Homeless Collage, is subtitled, "Residents of the Richest Country in the World." I am continually disturbed by the harsh extremes of wealth and poverty, material comfort, and degradation in our society. With its grim subject matter and sharp, angular forms, the collage is a criticism and call to look at this deeply rooted problem.
Houston's Project Row House is a community-based "work in progress" that brings together the arts and community revitalization. Rick Lowe, a self described political activist, curator, artist, and Project Row House's organizer, looked for ways to fuse his interests in social action and making art. Inspired by local black artists, he sought a means to work with artists, art professionals, local politicians, and African American organizations to help one of Houston's African American neighborhoods. Lowe found a double row of 22 old and abandoned houses. In 1985, with the help of community members, Lowe began a long-term project to restore and sustain a sense of community through creative endeavors. The project provides a resident artist, seven installation houses, a classroom, a gallery, residence facilities, child care, and guidance for teen mothers. (Text by Don Krug, 1996.)
The Shelter Project 1995  By: Drea Howenstein
Spring pruning vegetation; 20' high x 30' wide x 40' length

Artist/professor Drea Howenstein worked with students from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Amundsen High School, students and teachers from eight different Chicagoland public schools, the Bureau of Forestry/Streets and Sanitation, the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education, Winnemac Park Staff and several other individuals to build a temporary community public sculpture, The Shelter Project. The project involved local school communities in a cooperative endeavor that would direct attention toward three important issues essential to world citizenship: (a) Respect for nature, (b) compassion for the homeless, and (c) the necessity of sharing and managing our collective resources. Primary goals for the project targeted cooperative learning and critical problem solving through the making of art. Many of the schools opted to utilize the diversity of their cultural traditions in the development of a unique contribution to the project. Talk of its demise brought tears and requests that it at least be mulched so that its spirit could be passed on to both the Amundsen School garden and the neighborhood's community organic garden.
When Art Turns Violent: Images of Women, the Sexualization of Violence, and the Implications for Art Education

Yvonne Gaudelius & Juliet Moore

Approximately two years ago, after viewing a slide of Rubens' "The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippos," a group of students enrolled in an "art for elementary education majors" course were asked to write an interpretation of this work, as part of a series of art criticism activities that they had engaged in throughout the semester. Most of the students wrote what might be described as reasonable interpretations in that they discussed the work in formal terms and made judgments about the artwork. However, and this is what is of interest to us in this paper, only two students in a class of twenty commented on what the work represented, even though they were given the title of the painting.

The responses of a second group of elementary education majors provide a distinct contrast to those of the above class. These students were asked to write an interpretation of "The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippos." In addition to Rubens' painting, however, this group was also shown Margaret Harrison's work entitled "Rape." Harrison's piece consists of three friezes. The top frieze represents paintings by the "masters," that show images of women being objectified and, in some cases, quite literally raped, by the male characters in the painting and, one could argue, by the male spectator of the paintings. The second band of the work shows the viewer some of the instruments of rape and sexual violence, ranging from scissors to broken bottles. Finally, the third frieze recounts first-hand, legal, and media reports of rapes. The juxtaposition of these three sets of images forces the viewer to confront the disjunction between the myth of rape as it is depicted in the artistic tradition of Western culture and rape and sexual violence as a reality in many women's lives. In the case of the students who were shown both works, the juxtaposition allowed them to recognize that the painting by Rubens depicted an act of extreme violence—rape. This changed their interpretations and caused many of them to question for the first time the violence against women that is inherent in the art of Western society.

Feminist art historians, critics and art educators advocate precisely this type of questioning. Taking a feminist approach to interpretation provides art educators with the means to question various meanings of an artwork and its interpretations. Simultaneously, this enables us to shift away from the interpretive approaches currently in use in many art education classrooms. Elizabeth Garber promotes, "feminist approaches to criticism to displace the methods currently used by art educators for structuring art critical talk—methods that reproduce the modernist emphasis on originality, genius, and formal and expressive elements." Garber advocates the use of feminist criticism because, "it is based in consequential and contextual theories of art, recognizing art as a meaningful element of and response to culture and society." This interpretive approach renders the culture and society in which the artwork was created and in which we live an important part of our

3 Ibid., 19.
critical exploration of any work of art. Laurie Hicks supports this point of view when she argues that "feminist criticism may help our students and ourselves better come to terms with the ways in which visual imagery can be understood as a factor in the social definition, reproduction, and construction of gender." Hicks outlines three goals of feminist art criticism: (a) "To provide an analysis of the socio-cultural and historical contexts within which a work is created," (b) "to encourage inquiry into how we might rethink certain socially accepted ideas and values as a consequence of the insights we gain through the critical analysis of visual images," and (c) "to facilitate a movement toward the acceptance of subjective or personal meaning in the analysis and valuing of works of art." While we strongly advocate the importance of all three of these goals, we are concerned primarily with Hicks' second goal. If the culture of violence against women is to be dismantled and social change is to be effected, we must question and subvert everything that contributes to what Susan Brownmiller calls the "rape culture" of the United States. Therefore, we begin this paper by discussing examples of works of art that have gone unquestioned for too long; specifically, images of women being assaulted by men.

By undertaking this analysis we follow Joanna Frueh's suggestion that, "feminists serve both art and art history: by seeking knowledge about the overlooked meanings of art; by examining our own unacknowledged assumptions and biases and those of previous and contemporary art historians and critics; and by developing ways to write about art that will serve as new models for art critical discourse." Further, the approach taken in this paper is one that melds the disciplines of art criticism and art history. This approach is not without precedent in feminist analysis. As Frueh writes, "feminist art critics join the supposedly incompatible modes of art historical and art critical practice, wedding deep responsiveness to art with factual information, such as biography, sources of an individual artist's work, and stylistic connections with other artists and movements."

Traditional art historical analysis emphasizes only the formal characteristics of a work of art, its provenance and its iconography, but such an analysis neglects to identify the content of the work and to question its effect on the viewer. These forms of analysis have been challenged by feminist art historians and critics. As Susan Feagan points out, "a cluster of concepts that have been the primary organizers of art-historical interests (genius, master, canon, aesthetic quality) and a whole range of artist-centered and object-centered concepts (intention, representation, expression, form) have come under attack." This new tack taken by feminist art historians and critics requires that these traditional discourses on art are shown to propagate male values.

This does not suggest that a feminist approach to art history and criticism seeks necessarily to supplant traditional methodologies. Rather, as Joanna Frueh writes, "the new complements and amplifies the old, for fresh analyses and interpretations of style and iconography show that art is not value-free and that previous scholarship has not taken this into consideration." However, some feminist art historians and critics argue that a feminist revision of art historical methodologies does, by definition, supplant traditional approaches to art historical inquiry. Art historian Susan Feagan terms this approach "incompatibilist," and suggests that these

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5. Ibid., 24.
7. By choosing this category of image, we are not suggesting that only women are the victims of sexual assault. Rather, we have limited ourselves to these works because there is a great number of images that depict women as the victims of sexual violence. These works have been drawn from standard art historical sources, many of which are used in the classroom.
9. Ibid., 51.
11. Frueh, 54.
types of “feminist art-historical analyses cannot simply be added to traditional art history,” but call for “an overthrow of the conceptual network that is fundamental to traditional ways of doing art history.”

Although we do not take the approach that all traditional art historical approaches should be rejected, we do believe that these conceptual frameworks need to be broadened. This expansion can be achieved in two ways: (a) By critiquing traditional works of art and their interpretations, and (b) by presenting works of art that directly challenge existing methodological approaches and, in a larger context, existing social values and behaviors.

By critiquing images and interpretations that depict scenes of rape and sexual violence, we participate in this expansion of theoretical frameworks. In addition, this critique demonstrates the biases inherent in many of these works and interpretations that currently go unquestioned in art education classrooms. Taking this perspective provides the context through which an alternative set of images and ideologies that challenge traditional representations and expectations of female behavior can be identified and analyzed. Finally, we conclude by providing strategies for criticism that constitute a broadened interpretive framework.

The Art of Rape

The canon of Western art history has allowed women to be depicted only within a severely limited range of representation; these permissible depictions can be categorized into a proscribed set of roles, such as virgin, happy mother, and harlot. These categories are strikingly comprehensive; there are very few exceptions to the fixed boundaries that artists (usually male) in

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12 Feagin, 306.

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a patriarchal society, have defined for women. It is notable that these roles depict female behavior in relation to male action; women in art are generally shown reacting to either anticipated or actual movements of men.

Hannah Arendt has written that “power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely the other is absent. Violence appears when power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in the disappearance of power.” Here, Arendt suggests that there is a continuum of power and violence and that the two are interconnected. The word continuum does not suggest a hierarchical array but rather a spectrum that indicates the relatedness of manifestations of violence. In these terms, the arrangement of violence, from its most benign forms to its most extreme, can clearly be seen as interconnected even though one form of violence does not inevitably lead to another, nor is there necessarily a compulsion to progress in a linear fashion through various stages or forms of violence. However, a vocal segment of the population argues that there is no correlation between male power over females and sexual violence, and that many forms of violence, such as pornography, are socially valid expressions of individual taste. Rather, we are told, each form of violence is a discrete phenomenon that is unconnected to more or less overt forms of violence and the assertion of male domination over women.

We assume, along with Arendt, the opposite position: that there are, in fact, very definite links between the various forms of violence against women, and that these links, when strung together, form a continuum of sexual violence that, to some degree, affects the life of every woman. One of the first steps we must take, as educators, is to recognize the complex state of

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connectedness between assertions of male power over female behavior, and overt forms of violence that are perpetrated by men against women.

In the book, *Men, Women and Aggression*, the psychologist and criminologist Anne Campbell maintains that overt violence is a relatively rare event because, in the daily running of life, power is exercised by men in far more subtle and effective ways than by brute force or the direct threat of force. Actual violence by men against women is a line of last resort used only when power is under threat. The most effective forms of power, however, are disguised in ways that render them all but invisible. This has been termed the “third dimension of power”—the sleight of hand by which oppressors hide oppression from the view of the oppressed.

We argue that educators should be most concerned with this third dimension of power since most of the images that we show in our classrooms and display in our museums manifest this invisible threat. These images have been condoned by society through the acceptance of certain myths about the solitary, romantic male artist, as well as through traditional art historical interpretations that often shy away from a discussion of the violent content of a work of art by concentrating instead upon its formal or iconographic aspects.

Confronting the content in the images of Western art and challenging the authority embedded in the texts of art history is a formidable task, and it is only recently that alternative interpretations have made their way into our classrooms, thus making visible the third dimension of power and challenging its hegemony.

A feminist approach places the depiction of violence against women on a continuum of sexual violence and allows us to link this form of male sexual violence with more routine forms of harassment, abuse, pornography, violence and most drastically, what authors Jill Radford and Diana Russell refer to as “Femicide,” the killing of women by men *because* they are women. We can place these images of violence on various spots of that continuum and approach their interpretation from a different perspective than the traditional art historical analysis.

For the purpose of identifying a continuum of sexual violence, we have used Liz Kelly’s definition of sexual violence as “any physical, visual, verbal, or sexual act experienced by a woman or girl as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact.” By positioning visual acts of violence on the continuum, this definition allows us to consider works of art and pornographic depictions within the context of sexual violence. This definition also allows us to erase some of the rigid boundaries between art and pornography, since objectification of women through visual categorization leads to denial of their subjective experience, and, from our point of view, objectification can occur whether we are looking at Picasso or *Playboy*.

In order to reinforce this point, we use Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon’s definition of pornography and ask readers to consider examples of paintings and sculpture from the “canon” of Western art *within* the context of this definition. Dworkin and MacKinnon define pornography as the,

graphically sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words that also includes one or more of the following: i. women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things, or commodities; or ii. women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy (or do not resist) pain or humiliation; or iii. women are presented as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in being raped; or iv. women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or

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bruised or physically hurt; or vii. women are presented in postures or positions of sexual submission, servility or display; or viii. women's body parts—including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, or buttocks—are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts; or ix. women are presented as whores by nature; or x. women are presented in scenes of degradation, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual; or xi. women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals.  

While we do not define images from texts such as Janson's History of Art as pornography, we would say that the very prettiness of these depictions of violence is, in many ways, more subversive than more overtly shocking images, since they constitute successful examples of the sexualization of violence, and may be more easily accepted in the classrooms and galleries of polite society. These images, can, however, be placed on the continuum of sexual violence against women. The examination of images and their interpretations, in light of this continuum, should not suggest that these works be censored; instead, we propose that such works should be critically examined in terms of the sexual violence that they contain. We posit that all images should be subjected to this type of critical scrutiny, in order to encourage, in Hicks' phrase, "inquiry into how we might rethink certain socially accepted ideas and values."  

In the context of other interpretations we now examine in more detail two works from the canon of Western art, and discuss the interpretations made of these images by various art historians. Again, we emphasize that we are looking at these images from a feminist and demystifying perspective that simultaneously gives a name to, and denounces, the sexualization of violence against women, no matter the context in which it occurs. When, with Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition of pornography in mind, we regard these images and hear how they have been interpreted, it becomes clear that, despite their validated situation in the canon of Western art, they are disturbing depictions of male violence against women.

It is important to note that the violence done to women is not only done through the images that we study in our classrooms. Violence to women is also manifested in art historical and critical writings. For example, in Frederick Hartt's History of Art, a standard introductory art history text, Hartt writes of Rubens' painting:

The Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus ... recalls forcibly Titian's Rape of Europa. ... The act of love by which Castor and Pollux, sons of Jupiter, uplift the mortal maidens from the ground draws the spectator upwards in a mood of rapture. ... Thus, the female types are traversed by a steady stream of energy. ... The low horizon increases the effect of a heavenly ascension, natural enough ... since this picture is a triumph of divine love; the very landscape heaves and flows in response to the excitement of the event.

At no point in Hartt's description of the painting does he mention the violence entailed in an act of rape. Instead, he refers to the scene as a representation of an act of love; indeed not just love but "divine" love. Further, although the two men in the painting are referred to by name, the two women become "female types."

Of course, not all images of nudes show an actual rape scene. However, there are many that show women as sexually available objects. As John Berger has stated, "men act and women appear." Berger argues that the depiction of women's sexual submission reminds the paintings' male owners of their

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21 Hicks, 23.
23 Berger, 58.
power. Not only did the owner of the painting possess the artwork, he also possessed the woman shown in the work.

The voyeuristic nature of many paintings of nudes should, to our mind, cause discomfort among us as spectators. Yet they are frequently discussed in terms of traditional art historical modes of judgment. Who painted the work? When was it done? Where does it fit within the body of work produced by this artist? By other artists? Despite discussion of subject and context, the prevalence of this deliberate disrobing and display of women’s bodies is often overlooked in many discussions about art.

We are not trying to suggest that viewing works such as these directly causes men to go out and rape women. What we are arguing is that these works help perpetuate a culture in which the sexual availability and objectification of women is taken for granted and where women’s permission for the assaults is implicit. In this light Berger’s statement of “men act and women appear” takes on a far more sinister meaning.

We next look at a series of photographs taken by Hans Bellmer in 1935 collectively entitled, *The Doll*. The so-called doll in the photographs is a fantastically grotesque dummy, made out of various female body parts, and placed in situations that indicate danger, foreboding and sexualized suffering. Our reaction to these images is one of shock, horror, repulsion, and anger, akin to the feelings we get when we hear on the news that yet another woman has been brutally murdered. The reaction of art critic Robert Hughes, however, was one of detached intellectual analysis, coolly defining *The Doll* as part of the tradition of the Marquis de Sade. Referring to the Surrealists’ admiration for Sade, Hughes wrote in *The Shock of the New*,

The extreme form of Sadeian imagery in Surrealist art was the work of Hans Bellmer, whose obsession with a young girl caused him to make an erotic dummy, articulated with ball-and-socket joints. Its limbs could be splayed, bent and combined at will [whose will?!] which made it an excellent vehicle for images of sexual

fantasy centered on rape and violence. . . . *The Doll* was almost infinitely pornographic, and its manipulated, abandoned look summed up the Surrealist image of woman as “beautiful victim.”

Hughes’s criticism does not challenge the image of sexual violence presented by *The Doll*, rather he revels in the violent pornographic nature of the piece. Bellmer’s own self-absorbed, misogynist interpretation of his work also acknowledges and delights in the pornographic violence of *The Doll*:

The pornographers, magicians and confectioners possessed that secret quality, the beautiful sugary quality, which we call nonsense but which brings us joy. . . . They—the pornographers—indicated less familiar paths for my curiosity . . . but the thought of [girls] left too many desires which insidiously, persistently, started moving towards a more definite target . . . but the girls did not offer the slightest opportunity of converting these desires aroused by their charm into destructive and creative activity. Certainly a fragment of what had been dreamed of was caught at times in a drawing, or in play with an oblivious woman. . . . But *The Doll*, which only lived on the ideas one projected onto it, which in spite of its boundless adaptability must be destined for despair, could I not find in the creation of this doll-like quality all the lustful delight and climax which my imagination was looking for? When my aggressive fingers, following the shape, slowly created limb by limb what my mind and senses had distilled, did I not achieve my final triumph over the girls, with their large eyes quickly glancing away whenever a conscious predatory look ensnared their charms? Fitting joint to joint, testing the number of different childish poses to which the doll could be adjusted, softly following the hollows, savoring the pleasure of the curves, losing my way in the shell shape of the ear, creating prettiness and also

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vindictively seasoning my creations with deformities.²⁵

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of Bellmer's description is his suggestion that the violent, sexual manipulation of the doll represents a victory over real women, over "the girls." Volker Kahmen, the author of the book Erotic Art Today, admonishes us:

sexuality merely denotes the physical functions of the sex organs, while eroticism refers to the sensual impulses which are at work in the mind. A sensual impulse drives the artist to work, urging him to achieve his best; his reward is originality. For this reason, the term "sexual," which refers to basic physical reactions, should not be used in connection with works of art; "erotic," on the other hand, refers to the creation of a work of art from an initial sexual impulse.²⁶

This attempt to separate the sexually violent from the erotic is a common device used to mask the violence that is represented in the image. In much the same way that art is deemed to be separate from pornography, so too is the erotic separate from the sexual. The maneuver serves to mask the text of sexual violence against women that is contained within the work.

Another well-known work is The Death of Sardanapalus, painted in 1827 by Delacroix, who once said: "a woman is only a woman, always basically very like the next one."²⁷ The Death of Sardanapalus depicts an ancient Assyrian ruler, who upon hearing of his incipient defeat, had all his precious possessions, including his women, destroyed. Apart from Linda Nochlin's feminist analysis of this work, none of the interpretations that we found of this famous painting fully questioned the acts of femicide. While some authors admitted to the problem of content, in the end they conformed to the type of art historical analysis described earlier.²⁸ Here are some examples, the first from Romanticism and Art, published in 1994:

It is hard to discern Delacroix's intentions. There is something frantic in the work's excesses, and it is tempting to see Delacroix himself in the impassive figure of Sardanapalus. The enclosed make-believe of the scene certainly has more than a hint of the voyeur at the brothel about it. Yet the curious inconsequentiality of the scene brings the attention back in the end to the technical achievement. For Delacroix has succeeded here in bringing the utmost confusion and discord under his control.²⁹

A second interpretation states that,

the vast picture suggests an enormous cornucopia. Everything Delacroix had loved, everything he had dreamed of, everything in which he had taken unrestrained delight, is in that cascade: one can almost smell the heady perfumes of it, mingled with the smell of blood rising in heavily curling puffs. . . There is the body of the woman, with its curves as lissome as her wavy hair and its flesh as bright as a fruit made of light itself. The Odalisques that Delacroix had depicted lying on voluptuous couches are now rolling on the bed of Death and their beauty exaltes a sudden fragrance like flowers cut down. One of them draws herself up in a spasm as her throat is cut, another stretches out towards the piece of stuff which will strangle her, another is already gasping in the death agony, and the most moving and tender of them all—she was, as we know, a Greek and was called Myrrha—is already abandoning herself, with arms, hair and

²⁶Ibid., 7.
body submissively offered to imminent annihilation. Never will imagination fly further into the fairyland of forgotten times and exotic worlds. In this sense Sardanapalus is perhaps Delacroix's most romantic picture.  

Here the violent death of women is associated with the sensual and the romantic. What is missing from this interpretation is any analysis of the relationship between the power of Sardanapalus, his possession of the women in the painting, and the sexual violence being perpetrated. As Sardanapalus' power wanes, his authority over his possessions is manifested as sexual violence—an example of the relationship between power and violence discussed earlier in this paper.

In the Delacroix painting, both the images and their interpretations are presented from a male perspective. By assuming that the viewer is male, the artist is able to gloss over the pain and humiliation of the women to concentrate on the male experience both within and outside the context of the painting. In other words, the naked bodies of the women are used for the pleasure of the characters in the work of art and the implied male viewer.

Images of sexual violence can be placed in any number of different categories. Three that we have identified are: the abducted woman, the allegorical experience of rape, and woman as a subject for ravishment, in which category we include women who are being spied upon by men. The majority of these images depict scenes either from classical myths of Greece and Rome, or from the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, or they show legendary moments in history, especially from the history of Greece and Rome. These sources were part of the classical education of men, and to a lesser extent, women, for hundreds of years. This cultural hegemony is only now being challenged in a variety of disciplines.

While we are not suggesting that images of Western art depicting violence against women be discarded and censored, we advocate placing these images on a continuum of sexual violence and developing strategies of resistance to combat their insidious message. At issue here is not whether these images should be shown, but what kinds of interpretations we should encourage our students to make.

Rereading Rape and Sexual Violence

In this section, we discuss alternative images and interpretive strategies that enable us to combat and subvert these depictions of sexual violence in our classrooms instead of blinding ourselves to their impact. Otherwise, we do not challenge the "truth" about what sexual violence is. For example, speaking specifically of rape, literary critics Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver have stated, "whether in the courts or the media, whether in art or criticism, who gets to tell the story and whose story counts as 'truth' determines the definition of what rape is. Focusing on the tales told [or not told] by voices within texts, by authors, by critics," and by artworks, allows us to reveal the ways in which the definitions of rape, as presented by the tradition of Western art history, are laden with questions of meaning, power, and voice. One feminist strategy in approaching these types of artworks is "to show how art and criticism share the well-documented bias of rape law, where representations of rape... are almost always framed by a masculinist perspective premised on men's fantasies about female sexuality and their fears of false accusation, as well as codified access to and possession of women's bodies." In addition,

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31To recognize that the implied viewer is male, one need not only look at the artwork. The history of patronage shows that the ownership of paintings has been almost exclusively male, since wealth and power in Western culture have been controlled by men. See, for example, Berger.

33Ibid., 2.
[the] act of rereading rape involves more than listening to silences; it requires restoring rape to the literal, to the body: restoring, that is, the violence—the physical, sexual violation. The insistence on taking rape literally often necessitates a conscious act of reading the violence and sexuality back into the artworks and texts where it has been deflected, either by the work itself or by the critics: where it has been turned into a metaphor or a symbol or represented rhetorically as titillation, persuasion, ravishment, seduction, or desire (poetic, narrative, courtly, military). . . . [Doing so] reclaims the physical, material bodies of women from their status as “figures” and reveals the ways in which violence marks the female subject both physically and psychologically.34

In the first part of this paper we presented such a rereading, one that restored the violence to the images of rape and sexual violence that form a large part of the canon of Western art history.

Another strategy to combat the dominant cultural myths about rape that are portrayed in artworks and texts is to produce works of art that challenge these myths. Feminist artist Suzanne Lacy, in collaboration with others, produced what is probably one of the most well-known challenges to the dominant rape narrative. From May 7 to May 24, 1977, Lacy organized the performance Three Weeks in May. In creating this performance, the artists’ primary motivation was to make the public aware of the reality and ubiquity of rape in Los Angeles [a city where the rape report rate was three times as high as the national average] by means of artistic practice.35 In the Los Angeles City Mall, located one story below City Hall, Lacy placed two twenty-five foot long maps. Each day Lacy stenciled the word “RAPE” in red on the first map at the coordinates where rapes had been reported to the Los Angeles Police Department in the previous twenty-four hours—an average of more than five a day.36 In addition, nine fainter impressions of the “RAPE” stamp were added to the map. These impressions reflected the estimated number of unreported rapes. The location of the rapes were also marked around the city by the placement of chalk, outline figures on the sidewalks next to the words “A Rape Happened Here.” On the second map, information vital to survivors and potential victims was provided. This map marked the location of emergency rooms and women’s shelters and provided hotline numbers.

As Lacy has written, the goal of this work was “to make the general public aware of the issue of rape in Los Angeles by advertising the maps and activities of Three Weeks in May. To publicize the rape prevention and intervention groups working on the piece. To provide the art community with a model for using socio-political information in a performance context.”37 In works such as these, Suzanne Lacy and other artists use their art to try and bring about social change. As art educators we can extend this movement by teaching about these works and using them to challenge dominant paradigms of social interaction between men and women, especially when they involve violence.

Many of these same issues were dealt with in the December 1977 performance In Mourning and In Rage, coordinated by Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz. In this piece, attention was drawn to the ten victims of the Hillside Strangler. The women taking part in the performance not only commemorated the victims, they also “attacked the sensationalized media coverage that contributes to the climate of violence against women.”38 In the performance, the women drew connections between these specific attacks and all form of sexual violence—an analysis that was missing from the media.

Jenny Diggs uses her works of art to provide the local

34Ibid., 4.
36Ibid., 51.
37Suzanne Lacy as quoted in Kruse, 52.
community with information about violence against women. For example, in her milk carton project, Diggs responded to issues of domestic violence. The impetus for this work came from Diggs' conversation with a battered wife. The woman stated, "I didn't know there was a way out. I thought this was it forever. So there ought to be work done on bread wrappers or milk cartons or cigarette packs; those are the things that most everyone buys on a regular basis." In response to this, Diggs decided to produce work that would reach victims of sexual abuse and violence in their homes. With the cooperation of the Tuscan Dairy of Union, New Jersey, 1.5 million milk cartons were produced and distributed in 1992. Three sides of the milk cartons carried the dairy's regular information; on the fourth was an image designed by Diggs which combined an image of a groping hand with text that gave information, statistics, and the number of a domestic violence hotline. The 800 number listed on the cartons received calls from victims of sexual abuse and domestic violence long after distribution of the cartons ceased.

This work is not only important for the assistance it rendered to those suffering from abuse, it is also important because it locates the discussion of sexual violence in the public sphere. Violence such as that which Diggs addressed is usually contained within the home—kept behind closed doors—and so "society is complicit insofar as it refuses to provide any means of protection and support." By moving the discussion into the public realm, Diggs works towards making us realize that we must move sexual violence out of the realm of the metaphorical and locate it in the reality of many women's lives.

In conclusion, we will discuss the work of Annie West. In 1993, West produced two designs, each of which was destined to be produced on rolls of toilet paper. The first, called A Portable Guide to Rape Prevention, was placed in women's bathrooms around New York City during the exhibition The Subject of Rape, held at the Whitney Museum that summer. In this piece, "West tells women how to direct their attack against a rapist's body: NAILS IN NECK, KNEE IN GROIN. However, West's guide does more than present these strategies, which at best provide a temporary deferment of rape. West also names the myths—'she really wanted it,' 'she didn't resist,' 'she is lying for revenge'—that need to be attacked." She connects these myths to previously named locations on the rapist's body that a woman should attack. In drawing this connection, she suggests that it is not only the physical aspects of rape that we must fight, but also societal misconceptions of rape and related subjects.

In a related piece, Stop Rape, West placed rolls of this toilet paper in men's bathrooms during the same time period. Statistics printed on this toilet paper described "who rapists are—between the ages of 15 and 54 (94.5%), with no prior history of criminal activity (51%)—and whom they rape—a woman known to them (75%), who is their dependent (92%), who is of their own race (97%)." Such statistics, delivered in the form of 'you' implicate the viewer and urge him to confront his own proximity to rape and the rapist." Using her art to intercede between the facts of rape and the myths of rape, West asks the viewer to challenge facile images that conceal the literal and bodily aspects of sexual violence.

Conclusions

We need to remember that the sexualization of violence can be seen as a continuum. We must encourage our students to think about the existence of this continuum of violence—the markers of which are the images of sexualized violence against women. Thus, an important part of our task is the critical reexamination of images of women within both fine arts and popular culture. This reexamination should also include a critique of writings about art, for these writings also form a part of this continuum of violence.

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39Quoted in Kruse, 53.
40Kruse, 54.
42Ibid., 26.
It is equally important that we present our students with images and texts that challenge the casual acceptance of sexualized violence against women. For example, works such as Suzanne Lacy’s *Three Weeks in May*, present a powerful critique of the rape culture found in this country. Yet we cannot end our critique by merely showing this work to our students. We must accompany this artwork with information such as statistics on the prevalence of rape and an exposure of the myths about rape—myths such as “she asked for it,” “she was dressed provocatively,” and “she said no, but she meant yes.” In addition, we must juxtapose this work with “high” art and popular culture images that erase the sexual violence involved in an act of rape. For example, one such exercise might ask students to contrast and compare the ways in which a work such as *Three Weeks in May* makes them think about rape versus the ways a painting such as Rubens’ *The Rape of the Daughter of Leucippe* allows us to gloss over the sexual violence being perpetrated.

In our classrooms, we could compare Bellmer’s *Dolls* with Barbara Kruger’s doll which we can *Use Only As Directed*. The Kruger piece can lead to questions such as, “Who is doing the using?” and “Who is giving the directions?” In this way not only do we interpret Kruger’s work, we also begin to critique the patriarchal tradition of sexual violence as portrayed in Western art. Kruger’s art could also serve to question the works of an artist such as Rubens. Given this juxtaposition, we could ask questions with our students such as “What is the difference in the way the female body is treated in each of these images?” Such an approach would allow students to examine the misogyny and sexual violence inherent in, for example, Delacroix’s *Death of Sardanapalus*. Further, it would lead them to critique a system of art history in which such misogyny is rewarded by the granting of a place in the history books.

In response to those who would argue that this is not a discussion of art but instead brings a social and political agenda into the classroom, we would argue that the issues of sexual violence, the objectification of women, pornography and rape have already been brought into the classroom through art historical tradition, and that it is our responsibility to begin to redress this situation. We must start to challenge the euphemistic and metaphorical way in which sexual violence against women has been represented in Western art. Whether this is done through an analysis of art historical texts and a rereading of images, or whether we begin this process by presenting alternative images, we can no longer afford to pretend that artworks that perpetuate a continuum of sexual violence do not contribute to the rape culture prevalent in this country. In doing this type of questioning, we can begin, as Doug Blandy and Kristin Congdon have suggested, to assist others to “see” the pornography and sexual violence against women that we all encounter in our daily life.43

In contemporary art education, there is much talk about using a contextual approach to our examination of works of art. While this is to be applauded, we need to move beyond a narrow contextual approach and develop an art education that includes the context of misogyny (and, of course, other contexts such as racism, ageism, heterosexism, and classism). We need to interrogate our teaching practices and examine the ways in which we might be contributing to an environment in which the sexualization of violence is encouraged and rewarded.

We believe that, given the prevalence of the types of representations discussed at the beginning of this paper, it is imperative that we disrupt the dominant tradition and begin to effect change in the classroom. The images we show, the ways we categorize them, the interpretations that we read, make and teach, and the paradigms within which we frame our understandings of art inevitably affect the way we act in the world. What we learn to see and think determines how we act.

If we do not question these powerful images and interpretations then we, as women and men, acquiesce to the gender roles assigned to us by a patriarchal culture. In addition, we pass on these conceptualizations of gender to the students we teach. The images that we have discussed here are by no means the only ones available, nor do they represent the only

non-traditional framework of images that should be shown. We believe that multiple interpretive frameworks need to be presented in order that no one tradition become dominant. If we merely substitute a new, but equally monolithic, approach to the creation and interpretation of artworks, then a new paradigm goes unquestioned and the status quo continues, albeit in a different form.

With our students, we can easily begin this process of questioning the paradigm by examining the gender roles that traditional imagery presents. Then we can move to a broader examination of the entire discipline of art. In studio, we can question the subjects we choose, the hierarchies of media we preserve, and recognize that the works we produce are more than expressions of color and form in which the content is irrelevant. By looking at non-mainstream works of art, we can develop a new perspective from which to view traditional Western art. This can lead us to challenge the values we attach to art, examine the supposed neutrality of aesthetic judgments, and question the concept of the inherent value of art objects in aesthetics. In talking and writing about works of art, we can develop new ways of ascribing meaning and new ways of understanding artworks. In art history we can trace the development of genres and realize how the connection between these genres create and reflect societal expectations of behavior.

Finally, we can create a space for women students to view art in a way that avoids the dilemma that feminist critic Griselda Pollock presents to us when she states,

Women are denied a representation of their desire and pleasure and are constantly erased so that to look at and enjoy the sites of patriarchal culture we women must become nominal transvestites. We must assume a masculine position or masochistically enjoy the sight of women's humiliation.  

Alternatives to this position can and must be found. While we do not deny the possibility that pleasure can be derived from images, whether the viewer is male or female, it is important to question the bases for this pleasure. There is a great divide between the limited range of representations of women and images that challenge and expand those representations. It is hoped that the use of a feminist critical process will bring about necessary change and extend the boundaries within which we teach about art and the world.

References


Discussions and Depictions of Women in H. W. Janson's *History of Art, Fourth Edition*

Paul E. Bolin

During the past twenty-five years there have been numerous highly charged and open criticisms levied against the field of art history. These accusations have been launched from a variety of fronts, both within and outside the discipline of art history (Simmons, 1990), with some of these critical questions and subsequent condemnation directed toward textbooks used to teach this subject in traditional courses that survey historical aspects of Western art. A primary criticism of these survey textbooks has been aimed at their lack of attention given to the important work of women artists. The manner in which these criticisms are treated by authors and editors of survey texts has definite ramifications for art education, a field in which preservice teachers are often required to complete a very limited number of courses in art history beyond those that present monuments of Western art through the use of such textbooks. These volumes then become the foundation and source of information art teachers use to instruct their students in art history.

Criticisms of art history survey textbooks such as H. W. Janson's *History of Art* have been pointed out and discussed for more than 20 years (e.g., Hagaman, 1990; Luomala, 1982; Parker & Pollock, 1981; Sloan, 1973). During this same period the work and influence of "rediscovered" (Petersen & Wilson, 1976, p. 2) women artists has been presented by many writers interested in questions related to feminist issues and art history. Beginning in the 1970s with writers such as Tufts (1974), Munsterberg (1975), Harris and Nochlin (1976), Petersen and Wilson (1976), and Greer (1979), continuing into the 1980s with Sherman and Holcomb (1981), Broude and Garrard (1982), Petteys (1985), Heller (1987), and Statkin (1989), and now in the 1990s, as seen through the work of Chadwick (1990), Lippard (1990), Waller (1991), Tippett (1992), Broude and Garrard (1992), and LaDuke (1992), there has been a growing movement toward documenting biographical information on women artists. These books plus numerous journal articles and other publications of this period encourage one to consider critical issues concerning women and art history (e.g., Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987; Nochlin, 1971; Nochlin, 1979; Nochlin, 1988). Yet, there has been little done to recognize specifically how authors and editors of survey texts in art history have responded to the many writings about women artists and feminist issues in art history. This paper is a step toward answering this question by examining ways in which women artists and depictions of women in art are treated in the most recent edition of Janson's *History of Art* (1991).

H. W. Janson’s *History of Art* was first published in 1962. The book was expanded and revised in 1969, and a second edition of the volume was printed in 1977. Anthony Janson, son of the late-H. W. Janson, has been responsible for directing the third and fourth editions of *History of Art* (1986, 1991). Anthony Janson undoubtedly is familiar with the numerous publications about women artists and the plentiful critical writings that have been directed toward this text, and, in response, selected some well-recognized women artists to be included in the latest edition of *History of Art*. An examination of this textbook reveals specific discussion of twenty-eight artists who are new to the fourth edition. One-third of this total—nine artists—are women, giving this book "half again as many women as were in the previous edition" (Janson, 1991, p. 41).

This step toward recognizing the critical place that women
share in the artworld is noteworthy. Yet, there remains the question of whether such biographical study and cursory identification of often “neglected women artists” (Gouma-Peterson & Mathews, 1987, p. 326) addresses in a satisfactory manner a number of paramount concerns regarding the omission of women and feminist issues from the art historical content presented in art history survey texts. Some critical questions require consideration: Is there a fundamental problem in including women artists in the format of a standard survey of art history textbook? Can filling the recognized historical gaps with the names, depictions of artwork, and cursory discussion of women artists who have been overlooked and omitted from the art historical canon do justice to teaching about women artists? By what standard(s) are the choices made to include particular women in these texts, and at the same time to exclude others? And, given the criticisms of textbooks such as Janson’s History of Art, how do the authors and editors of these texts treat the women artists and women depicted through the visual and verbal information they select to include?

The following is a list of the nine women artists that Anthony Janson has added to the fourth edition of this text: Sofonisba Anguissola, Camille Claudel, Nancy Graves, Angelica Kauffman, Käthe Kollwitz, Annette Lemieux, Paula Modersohn-Becker, Elizabeth Murray, and Susan Rothenberg. These women artists have been placed within the standard chronological format utilized by H.W. Janson, which reflects a particular way of thinking about history and art history. It is important to consider whether such a format for presenting women artists is a suitable arrangement for these discussions, yet the primary purpose of this investigation is not to directly analyze and critique the appropriateness of such an approach for the study of women in art history. This method has been called into question by writers such as Parker and Pollock (1981) and Gouma-Peterson and Mathews (1987).

In this study, examples of descriptive text and images are drawn from Janson’s most recent edition of History of Art (1991), for the purpose of showing that although more extensive discussions and depictions of women are included in the present edition than in earlier ones, the women considered in the text are often discussed in ways that misinform readers about the importance of women artists and how women are depicted in art. This paper is by no means exhaustive. It is intended to offer some specific instances to exemplify how Janson, to the detriment of women, has in some cases chosen to present, and at other times omit, information about women artists and depictions of women in art history.

Analysis of Text

Anthony Janson opens his discussion of Sofonisba Anguissola (c. 1535-1625) by indicating that she is the first woman artist to be “encountered [in the text] . . . since ancient Greece” (1991, p. 516). The author goes on to state that, “The vast majority of all artists remained anonymous until the ‘Late Gothic’ period, so that all but a few works specifically by women have proved impossible to identify. Women began to emerge as distinct artistic personalities about 1550” (p. 516). At this point Janson begins a short discussion of selected aspects of Anguissola’s life and work. In doing so Janson fails to ask significant questions or address in any way why this societal transition occurred. It would be worthwhile to ask the following: What shifts in Western European society occurred around 1550 that brought about this apparent change in contemporary art and life? It must be remembered that this is a survey textbook, and contextual issues that would shed light on this question are quite complex. Yet, it seems this juncture of the book would be an appropriate occasion for Janson to raise critical questions and introduce some of the primary issues regarding the changing role and perception of women artists that occurred during the mid-sixteenth century. The opportunity, however, is passed over.

I believe Janson offers a disservice by not addressing a number of critical topics. Through his text Janson could assist readers in understanding more fully purposes of art history by raising some legitimate and necessary questions, such as those asked by Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin (1976). They write:

Why was the Renaissance almost over before any
women artists achieved enough fame for their works to be treasured and thus preserved and for their accomplishments to be noted by contemporary biographers? Why did women artists not reach the historical status of Giotto, so to speak, until almost two hundred fifty years after he had become prominent? What made it possible for a small but growing number of women to have successful careers as painters after 1550 but prevented them from having any significant impact before that date? (p. 13)

An exploration of the type of questions asked by Harris and Nochlin would contribute to an understanding of important content in art history by challenging us with questions about the past. Janson has suitable opportunity to introduce the type of questions students of art history and art education should be asking, yet Janson’s silence in not broaching this subject is a significant omission from the text.

In his brief discussion of Sofonisba Anguissola, Janson chooses to focus on the artist’s painting of her sister Minerva, that was completed about 1559. Janson describes Anguissola’s work, and specifically Minerva, in the following way: Anguissola, “was at her best in more intimate paintings of her family, like the charming portrait she made of her sister Minerva” (p. 516). What connotations does the word “charming” carry? Would Janson employ this word in his writing to describe the work of a male artist? I have not located any such designation in the text. In Janson’s discussion of Jacopo Tintoretto, which occurs directly following that of Sofonisba Anguissola, the writer describes Tintoretto as “an artist of prodigious energy and inventiveness” (p. 516). Later in the book, Correggio is described as “phenomenally gifted” (p. 520) and Frank Stella is called “brilliant” (p. 745). In Janson’s text the status of “genius” is conferred upon no less than 15 men, including Hugo van der Goes (p. 433), Masaccio (p. 459), Michelangelo (p. 495), Raphael (p. 504), El Greco (p. 520), Pieter Bruegel the Elder (p. 543), Caravaggio (p. 549), Borromini (p. 560), Rembrandt (p. 574), Vermeer (p. 581), Velazquez (p. 582), Goya (p. 630), Cole (p. 647), van Gogh (p. 687), and Picasso (p. 726). No women artists discussed in Janson’s text receive this label of distinction.

Furthermore, Janson describes George Bellows’s Stag at Sharkey’s as expressing “heroic energy” (p. 725) and Anselm Kiefer’s painting To the Unknown Painter is characterized as “a powerful statement” (p. 755). Sofonisba Anguissola’s work, on the other hand, is regarded by Janson as “charming.”

Not all writers view Sofonisba Anguissola’s Minerva in such a way. Art historian Nancy Heller, in her book Women Artists: An Illustrated History (1987), describes Minerva as “another exceptionally strong work” (p. 16). We are informed through language; the obvious as well as more obscure use of words and phrases directs us to consider and construct the world in certain specific ways. How we are presented with and thus interpret information about art and artists shapes our view of them. For this reason it is essential to acknowledge the powerful role that words play in forming one’s perception of a particular artist or work of art. We must recognize the immense difference there is between, and the didactic implications that emerge from, regarding a painting such as Anguissola’s Minerva as “exceptionally strong,” the way Heller describes it, and “charming,” as it is referred to by Janson.

A second and similar example of the way I believe language is used by Janson to misinform us about women artists is found in his discussion of Nancy Graves (born 1940) and her work. Janson describes Graves’s sculpture Trace (1979-80) in the following manner: “The ribbonlike boughs of this seemingly elastic tree support a lacy foliage of steel mesh. Caught in its ‘leaves’ are a brightly colored ladder, kite frame, streamers, and ropes, which complete the gaily elegant effect” (p. 772). If this artwork had been executed by a male artist would Janson have described it as creating a “gaily elegant effect”? I think not. Janson refers to Frank Stella’s Empress of India as “majestic” (p. 745). William Blake’s The Ancient of Days is called a “memorable image” (p. 643). Joan Miro’s Composition is labeled “striking” (p. 732). This is not the case with Nancy Graves’s Trace. This sculpture by Graves should be described and discussed with words that enhance her credibility as an artist and cut to significant issues addressed through her work, rather than portraying it through phrases that bring to mind images of frailty, delicacy, and susceptibility. The description “gaily

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elegant effect" by Janson does nothing to recognize the significance and power of this sculpture as one of Nancy Graves's many thought provoking works of art.

In writing about the seventeenth-century female artist Judith Leyster (1609-1660), Janson states: "Like many women artists before modern times, her career was partially curtailed by motherhood" (1991, p. 574). Does this statement imply that in "modern times" societal circumstances have been altered from how they were in the seventeenth century with regard to the curtailing of one's profession due to motherhood? Are women of "modern times" exempt from having their artistic pursuits constricted by choosing to be a parent? A look around the artworld, and society in general, shows that many women artists and women in all professions continue to have their careers not only curtailed but altered drastically and even ended by motherhood. It was true for Judith Leyster in the seventeenth century, and has been a way of life for thousands of other artists since that time. It is terribly naive and misleading for Janson to imply that the curtailing of professional activity because of motherhood was a phenomenon found only in days past, and does not occur in contemporary society.

Janson's disservice to women occurs not only through the choice of words he uses to discuss female artists, but also takes place through the selection of images employed to visually represent their work. For example, Janson's discussion of the life and work of Camille Claudel (1864-1943) focuses primarily on the artistic and personal relationship that occurred between her and Auguste Rodin. Janson offers that Claudel "emerged as an important artist in her own right" (p. 678), yet the subordinate position that Janson believes Claudel holds to Rodin is manifested in what Janson writes and depicts visually in his textbook. Janson believes that, "some of her [Claudel's] strongest pieces might be mistaken for his [Rodin's]" (p. 678). The implication of such a statement is that only a few of Camille Claudel's most impressive works would be worthy of being confused with the sculptures of Auguste Rodin. It is assumed through this view that Claudel's work as a whole could not approach the standard set by Rodin.

To augment his discussion of Camille Claudel, Janson included with the text one image of the artist's work. Janson chose to place within the book a visual representation of Claudel's sculpture *Ripe Age* (c. 1907). Janson describes this work in the following manner:

*Ripe Age* was begun at the time when she [Claudel] was being replaced in Rodin's affections by another woman, his long-time companion Rose Beuret. It shows Rodin, whose features are clearly recognizable, being led away with apparent reluctance by the other woman, who is portrayed as a sinister, shrouded figure. ... The nude figure on the right is a self-portrait of the pleading Claudel. (p. 678)

This image shown in Janson's text clearly situates Camille Claudel in a subordinate position to that of Rodin. In this piece there is a powerful sense of abjection, as the image of Rodin seemingly steps away from the figure of Claudel, who is stripped bare, on her knees, arms outstretched, begging for Rodin's return.

Of the many sculptures that could have been included in the text, why has Janson selected this particular work? Was this piece chosen by Janson because it is the single sculpture that exemplifies the narrative content of Camille Claudel's work? Was it selected because it represents Claudel's finest artwork? Is *Ripe Age* considered most expressive of Claudel's artistic style? Or, could it be that this sculpture was included in the book because it, together with the written narrative, presents and reinforces the notion that the actions and artwork of Camille Claudel were and should be subordinate to those of Auguste Rodin? If it was Janson's desire to include a visual representation that matched his textual narrative about the association between Camille Claudel and Auguste Rodin, why did he not select to include one of Claudel's sculptural busts of Rodin, to strengthen the artistic connection between pupil and student? Art historian Nancy Heller (1987) took such an approach and achieved a successful link between Claudel and Rodin by showing a bronze bust, *Auguste Rodin*, that Claudel completed in 1892 (p. 107).
Throughout the book there are many instances that could be identified and discussed to show how Janson’s choice of information and employment of language and images misinform us about the importance of women in art. Another, and final example, directs our attention toward information that Janson chose to exclude from discussion; and is an omission from his examination of Egyptian art. In the text, Janson’s initial reference to pharaoh is followed directly by the masculine term “(king)” (1991, p. 97). Throughout Janson’s discussion of Egyptian art, references to pharaoh are always given in the masculine (pp. 97, 101, 110). Such attribution to pharaoh, when placed only in masculine terms, fails to acknowledge what Nancy Luomala stated in her 1982 work, that “at least a half dozen female pharaohs have been recognized” (p. 27), with Queen Hatshepsut being the most famous.

The Funerary Temple of Queen Hatshepsut is mentioned and shown in Janson’s book, but no information is given concerning the ruling influence of this Queen in ancient Egypt. Queen Nofretete (Nefertiti) is referred to in Janson’s survey text, but only with regard to her being “Akenaten’s queen” (p. 114). According to Luomala (1982), the importance of female rulers such as Queen Hatshepsut and Queen Nefertiti has been overlooked by art historians. She argues that these distinguished Egyptian Queens must be given a more clear and prominent place within the study of hierarchical lineage in ancient Egypt. Luomala (1982) concludes:

Egyptian princesses and queens could assert their power visibly, like Hatshepsut or Nefertiti, or elect to function as the “power behind the pharaoh.” In either case, Egyptians knew, as many art historians will not, that the Great Wife made whomever she married into a living king, whether brother or commoner…. Thus, if we are to interpret Egyptian art accurately, we must . . . remember to couch our thinking about Egyptian art in matrilineal terms. (p. 30)

How does Janson treat this information about the importance of the queen in Egyptian rule? During his discussion of the sculpture Mycerinus and His Queen (2599-2571 B.C.), Janson has perfect opportunity to address issues of matrilineal rule in ancient Egypt. However, as he is poised at this crucial juncture of discussion, Janson side-steps this matter. Janson states: “Since the two [king and queen figures] are almost the same height, they afford an interesting comparison of male and female beauty as interpreted by one of the finest Old Kingdom sculptors” (1991, p. 105). The fact these male and female ruling figures are the same height may have little to do with the sculptor’s interpretation of beauty, but rather their equal stature may well be the visual demonstration of the comparable position this couple held as rulers of ancient Egypt. Janson omits this information about the importance of women in Egyptian leadership, and bypasses an excellent opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion about this significant piece of art in Egyptian society. This appears to be another instance of an interpretive approach often used by Janson and others—that is, to focus attention on matters of formal beauty while disregarding the discussion of issues that involve contextual substance.

Conclusion

Several of the traditional structures that make up the field of art history are presently undergoing reappraisal. In some instances these inveterate institutions are being supplanted by alternative directions and descriptions of the discipline. Janson’s History of Art, as it stands in its fourth edition, does little to reflect these alterations within the field of art history nor to bring about meaningful recognition of women artists, their art work, and the professional activities of current art historians who are writing about feminist issues in art history.

Without question, women in the past and currently have exercised a critical function within the history of art. In the words of Parker and Pollock (1981), “the evidence” to support this “is overwhelming” (p. xvii). This acknowledgment of the abundance and value of women in art is recognized by Janson and reflected through the expanding number of women presented in each subsequent edition of his text. However, the way Janson introduces this information misinforms the reader about serious contributions that women have made and continue to accomplish in the world of art.
The manner in which women artists and their art are treated by writers of art history survey textbooks is of consequence to art education. Art educators have as their primary responsibility the instruction of future generations about the role the visual arts play in society and in the lives of individuals. The information that art educators receive and internalize from art history survey texts will not be buried within the vast body of material that coalesces to form a teacher of art. It will reveal itself in the educational setting by the manner in which an educator treats the subject of art history. The knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about art history that art education students secure through contact with these art history survey books will be conveyed to their students in the future.

As teachers take an active role in presenting art history information to their students, these art educators must become knowledgeable of art history content and also recognize the manner in which this subject matter is presented to them and their students through the survey books employed to teach this subject. Students will then be equipped to, among other things, identify attitudes about women in art that are displayed through the content about women in art that is presented in these texts, and consider how these two outcomes sometimes do not mesh. As art education students become aware of how language and images are employed to shape their views of artists and artwork, they will see the potential hazard presented to them and their students through texts such as Janson's *History of Art*.

We must also look to the future. In all likelihood, during the next few years a fifth edition of Janson's *History of Art* will be published. This book will probably maintain its position as the central art history survey textbook, and will be used often in the academic preparation of art teachers. Who will be the women artists that Janson adds to the following edition of his text? How will these women and their art be selected and treated? Will students of art education be able to recognize, and challenge if necessary, how women artists are being examined in this book? At the present time we can only speculate about how these three questions might be addressed. Responses to the initial two questions, while important, are for the most part beyond our influence; Janson will select the particular women artists to include in his text, and determine how they will be discussed. For those of us in art education our task centers on the third question. It is imperative that we assist our students in recognizing what is being taught to them through survey textbooks in art history, and equip these students with skills to examine critically and expose the beliefs and attitudes that are being presented along with the subject content of such books. An understanding of the underlying messages about women that are presented through texts such as Janson's *History of Art* is vital for the professional development of students in art education and for their future students to recognize, if society is to alter its perceptions of women artists in history and support the crucial value of women in contemporary art and life.

**References**


Some Results of Feminist Collaboration in the Visual Arts: Changes in Art History and Art Criticism

Cynthia Bickley-Green & Anne G. Wolcott

Abstract

Women's activity in the visual arts both in and outside of the art institutions of Europe and the United States reveals a history of collaboration in artistic production and political activism. This paper analyzes the effects of feminist collaboration upon the disciplines of art, the pedagogy of art, and the administration of art institutions. In Part I, the authors review the impact of feminist collaboration in art history, aesthetics, art criticism, and art production. Part II provides examples of collaborative experiences of women in higher education art institutions and in some art communities in the United States, Scandinavia, and Italy. Three conclusions emerged from the review: (a) Collaboration facilitated women's entry into the visual arts; (b) collaborative dialogue has changed the academic structures of art criticism and art history, but collaboration has had a minimal effect in the areas of aesthetics and art production; and (c) collaboration has not resulted in a significant change in the administration or pedagogy of art institutions.

Feminist Collaboration in the Visual Arts: Changes in Art History and Art Criticism

The authors suggest that collaborative dialogue between many different academicians and visual art professionals can create a more normative, comprehensive foundation for the visual arts disciplines. For example, in anthropology, visual art is considered a cultural activity that results in visual form. This definition is applicable to all societies. Some women's artwork falls into this general interpretation. Another instance may be taken from psychologists who have additional views on human behavior and perception that enrich knowledge of activities related to the visual arts. The paper cites women theorists who have demonstrated an ability to consider and connect many ideas and disciplines, and who have contributed to the reformation of a normative, more pluralistic art theory.

Feminist Collaboration in the Visual Arts: Changes in Art History and Art Criticism

Collaborative feminist activities have changed the disciplines of art and the nature of art education. Traditionally, to collaborate means to work in conjunction with another, or, others, and to co-operate, especially in a literary or artistic work. Often collaboration of women in art is linked with artistic enterprise and production. In the 1970s and 1980s women's collaborative visual art included the Los Angeles' Women's Building, J. Chicago's Dinner Party, publications such as Heresies, and performance teams such as S. Lacy and L. Labowitz's Ariadne. These collaborations facilitated women's personal creative expressions. As women worked with others to create artworks that reflected women's experience, the societal silence surrounding women's life experience was broken. Just as often, for women art professionals, collaboration took the form of political activity for the purpose of achieving a common social or economic goal. In most cases, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries collaborating feminists explored political action to ease women's entrance to institutions of higher learning where professional training in the visual arts occurred. By the 1970s, collaborative political and creative work stimulated (a) the deconstruction of the disciplines of art; (b) the appointment of women to some professional academic and museum positions; (c) a new regard for, if not acceptance of, art by women; and (d) an introduction of pluralism into the visual arts.
However, deconstructive theory has not overturned academic conventions designed to promote and maintain the existing hegemony. Male visual artists have always been eligible for entrance into institutions that would promote their career building and individual recognition (Niceley, 1992). Today, some art schools continue to accept only art students whose works meet the art school criteria of craft and "look." Quality progress in certain programs still depends on gender, age, and creating a particular art school image. One older, female graduate student whose sculptural work demonstrated extraordinary representational skill and reflected calm domestic forms was harshly criticized for creating such work. Her art was not particularly eclectic or "far-out," nor did it contain a raging political message. Perhaps, if the woman had been a man, she would have been hailed as a gifted, hero artist despite the aesthetic preference for domestic representation. She would have been embraced by aestheticians who would accept male representation of visual experience as readily as they accept selected forms of visual abstraction, visual-political expression, and ritual objects in the approved deconstructivist mien. Or had the woman incorporated a tempered feminist message into her work, she might have been accepted more easily because her work would have been in step with prevailing contextual theory that women should create political messages. One may counter the fact that an older woman was in an art school as a student is still an event to be celebrated. Never-the-less, art institutions have not embraced an art theory that permits art education professionals to appreciate and understand the unique qualities of each person's visual expression regardless of that person's demographic statistics. The foundation for this understanding may result in a common theory of art that transcends the au courant parameters of art theory.

Beginning about 1881, during the process of women's entry into visual art schools, first as students and then as teachers, two major circumstances evolved. In relation to the structure of the visual art fields, women contributed to the initiation of pluralistic or contextual criticism of the visual arts. Also, many more women became art historians and their sensibility reformed the foundation of art history. However, the art world of the last decade of the twentieth century has not yet recognized women's work as contributing significantly to the development of new, inclusive aesthetics or, in fact, to the development of new visual art forms. Additionally, although some administrative and pedagogic structures within art institutions have been modified by the inclusion of women into the professorial ranks, student bodies, and curatorial and docent staffs of museums; as noted above, the actual policies and administrative structure of these institutions is only now beginning to change. In summary this paper explores two results of feminist collaboration in relation to women's entry into the visual art academy: (a) How the disciplines of art have changed, and (b) how the institutions of art have changed. In this study, the academy refers to the practices of established institutions of higher education and museums both in the United States and Europe.

Feminist Collaboration in the Visual Arts Disciplines

Visual art disciplines developed by Euro-American scholarship comprise four distinct academic areas: art criticism, aesthetics, art history, and art production or the making of visual objects. Sensitive to the interconnectedness of human society, women artists, art critics, art theorists, curators, and art historians have contributed in varying degrees to the construction of pluralistic, contextually-based definitions of art theory. For example, marginal art objects traditionally crafted by women (as opposed to most works in fine art museums) have been put nearer the center of artistic creativity according to writers such as Korsmeyer (1993). Also, the process that creates these items has become legitimized by academic study (Congdon, 1985). Through collaborative dialogue, women have produced artworks that reveal the unique experiences of women such as childbirth (Chicago, 1984) and other feminist social concerns (Raven, 1988). These two particulars (a) the development of new art theory that includes works crafted by women and related to the contextual rituals of food preparation, child bearing, and homemaking; and (b) the creation of the works that depict female experience not previously shown in art, such as a women's view of sexual experiences, are substantive manifestations of the other voice and vision that were of minor concern in art before the 1970s. This other voice and vision calls for changing the disciplines of art and the institutions that promote visual art study.
Perhaps it is commonplace to say that acceptance of new visual images is a consequence of the development of new art theory and criticism. Yet the synchronous relation of theory to practice and practice to theory is paramount in creating change. Women’s art representing women’s experience could not be admitted to the academy until a new theory of art was developed. Similarly, a new feminist art theory was needed in order to generate new artworks (McNay, 1992). The current status of women’s art work seems to call for additional theory to integrate women’s creative expressions fully into visual art culture.

Elements that brought about the need for change and collaboration include the women’s interpretation of full citizenship and suffrage and women’s belief in the equity of each individual—a belief rooted in English law and the French revolution. Changing economic structures specific to the visual arts such as the declining prestige of the art academies in Europe (Parker & Pollock, 1981) and the need for art schools in the United States to maintain or increase enrollment have played a role in the acceptance of more women into art institutions. Three major coordinates—social change, the second industrial revolution, and rigorous academic practice—contributed to women’s increased participation in art in this century (Elliot & Wallace, 1994). Culture, a social reality, develops outside of the academy. Women’s knowledge has developed outside of the visual art institutions and disciplines. This paper explores how art structures have or have not changed as a result of women’s experience and creative expression of that experience.

Part I: The Four Disciplines

Although the organization of the art activities into aesthetics, art criticism, art production, and art history reflects Western academic practice, analogous social activities occur in non-Western cultures. Anthropologists, who study the art of small-scale societies, note the imprecise boundary between art and non-art, and document the aesthetics of persons within small-scale societies who make judgments about visual forms. Anthropologists affirm that the culture of small-scale societies determine aesthetic qualities in art. Art objects also enhance the small-scale societies’ perception of the world (Layton, 1991, pp. 4-7). Criteria for making judgments about art and the idea that art enhances perception are elements of aesthetic systems in most societies.

Further, while art history as a profession is not always present in non-Western cultures, scholars have documented ownership of images such as the stamps on Chinese drawings or prints, or the guardianship over certain objects. For example, the guardians of yanamio baskets are celebrated in Lega (Central Africa) society. The basket passes to the most recently initiated member of the ritual community. In one study, society members remembered the names of forty-two members of the community who had owned a yanamio basket. Further, some objects in this society are subject to individual ownership, some to group ownership (Layton, 1991). There may be vast differences between memorizing guardianship lineages of ritual objects in Lega society and writing art history in Western society, yet the service to each culture is similar. Both Western and non-Western societies document the ownership histories of objects. Therefore, although the disciplines of art are Western constructions, other social activities assume these roles in many cultures. This paper examines the effects of feminist collaboration in the social activities surrounding art criticism, aesthetics, art history, and art production.

Criticism

Since the early 1970s, feminist artists and art critics adamently critiqued mainstream art and art criticism. One may say with little exaggeration that a whole system of formalist art criticism fell under attack. A series of articles published in Women Artists News, 1979, documents in a vivid, episodic way the fall of modern art criticism, or as it was eventually tagged, formalist art criticism. The first of these articles describe panel discussions held at Cooper Union and the New Museum in New York City entitled: “Artist and Critic: The Nature of the Relationship” and “The State of Formalism.” In explaining these events, the editor of Women Arts News, Judy Seigle, writes that what was initially considered art criticism became formalism. Formalism was considered elitist. According to Seigle, the outcome of this challenge to formalism was that art criticism
entered a crisis which persists today (Seigle, 1992). Both men and women who were vocally critical of what they heard attended these two panel discussions. Their objection—both written and oral—created the dissonance that challenged the canons of traditional modern criticism. These sessions often attacked the art theories of Clement Greenberg.

These articles deconstructed the criterion of formalist criticism. Formalist criticism posits that an artwork is an object complete in itself. The artwork, free from its environmental milieu, should be studied for its own unique internal principles. A new paradigm described as contextual criticism evolved. In this paradigm, art grows out of and reflects its time and place in relation to the artist, the artistic tradition, and the critical theory. Feminist, Marxist, and African American theorists established the art canons for the 1980s. However, critics of contextualism contend that these approaches (a) pull the viewer's attention from the unique characteristics of the work and responds inordinately to the instrumental affect of the work; (b) limit criticism to that which "fits" with the context, the culture, or the style; (c) detract from the possibility of changing meaning; and (d) if used in educational settings may immoderately politicize the classroom (Gillespie, 1991; Blaikie, 1992).

Feminist art critics who recognized the dearth of women's imagery and women's participation in art initiated intellectual challenge. Their works raised the consciousness of significant numbers of academics. One of the most striking circumstances to come to the attention of aestheticians was that feminist awareness altered the way that the ideal viewer saw a painted female nude in an art gallery. Female art viewers were required to assume a masculine point of view when observing art, in order to actually experience the work from a traditional aesthetic stance (Korsmeyer, 1993). The knowledge represented in elite, fine art painting was gender specific and concerned primarily with the explication of the male gaze. The academic questions that developed then in the 1970s remain unanswered today: "What is the range of the female gaze?" "Once female experience is known can it be reconciled or integrated with male interests to form a more inclusive understanding of the world?" "Does the representation of female knowledge result in fine art?"

Contextual criticism, which involves a demographic focus on the gender, political, and ethnic status of the artist and how these demographics are manifested in the art work, may offer answers to these questions.

In the 1990s there was still discomfort when even traditional female vision was represented in art. For example, when reviewing the graphic work of female artist Jody Mussoff, male art reviewer Michael Welzenback (1992) states:

Mussoff's riveting colored-pencil drawings and oil paintings of women, clothed or nude, alone or in groups, always manage to evince a disturbing duality in the viewer—or in this viewer, in any event. . . . By and large the women here are young and lovely, sensuous and animated. But all of them—even the most attractive nudes—are absolutely untouchable. Something that sets Mussoff's nude studies apart from the work of so many other artists, male or female, is the fact that all of her subjects have an identity. (p. D2)

The critic suggests that female knowledge about women in graphic art may not be comfortable, or recognized as appropriate, or even recognized as visual knowledge at all. Do nudes always have to be touched? Can females be represented as living in a personal space? Is it appropriate to represent human identities in art?

The Welzenbach critique confirms that males distort the female according to their image of her (Code, 1991). Since humans make knowledge, the male image of women is certainly accurate for them—that is not distorted. What is not admitted or explored is the female image of women, the acceptance of that image, and, eventually, the integration or reconciliation of images of women by both men and women. This integration would allow women's experience to create a knowledge as valuable and commonly acceptable or understood as the knowledge of men. Rosemary Betterton (1987) points out that we look at art for entertainment and pleasure, not solely for accuracy in representing social
reality. The stance of the voyeuristic male gaze does not exhaust the possible ways of seeing.

Although one may find isolated examples of art criticism that adequately address women's art images, that sensibility is not prevalent in academic art literature. For example, many art textbooks that reach thousands of undergraduates include presentation of this problem, but not as an integral part of the book. In one instance (e.g., Kissick, 1993), the text isolates women's problem and headlines a question posed by classical feminist theorists Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1981): "Why has it been necessary to negate so large a part of the history of art, to dismiss so many artists, to denigrate so many works of art simply because the artists were women?" (cited in Kissick, 1993, p. 477). The author John Kissick concludes that "though relatively young as a critical movement, feminist art and criticism have been essential in broadening the narrow parameters of art and exposing culture's unspoken relation to issues of gender and power" (1993, p. 489). While this situation is important, this manner of isolating feminist art criticism segregates feminist art within feminist politics of gender and power. Kissick sidesteps feminist experience as knowledge or art in a broader sense and avoids the potential of women's art to create general knowledge. The implied dialogue remains in the political field.

Terry Barrett (1994), whose introduction to the discipline of art criticism is used in many undergraduate art classes, cites passages from women critics to describe feminist aesthetics. He describes feminist aesthetics and criticism, and in this manner, affirms feminist thought along with other stances such as modernism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. Also, Barrett articulates the notion that art is knowledge and knowledge of women's experience is as valuable as knowledge of male experience.

Other writers have begun to affirm the creative knowledge and production of women in mainstream culture. In their book Women Artists and Writers: Modernist (im)positionings (1994), Bridget Elliott and Jo-Ann Wallace show how women such as Peggy Guggenheim, Romaine Brooks, Gertrude Stein, and Marie

Laurencin shaped the modernist notions of the avant-garde, professionalism, genius, and economic disinterestedness (p. 15). In Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change (1984), Lucy Lippard weaves women's art through her recollections of political art of the 1970s and early 1980s. In this context women's art such as the performance piece of Ariadne In Mourning and in Rage, have unusual unity and power. Lippard writes:

One of the feminists' goals is to reintegrate the esthetic self and the social self and to make it possible for both to function without guilt or frustration. In the process, we have begun to see art as something subtly but significantly different from what it is in the dominant culture. (p. 151)

Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology, edited by Cassandra Langer, Joanna Frueh, and Arlene Raven (1988), critiques the theory and practice of feminist art and offers suggestions for how to reshape the art world.

The interests of feminist critics has expanded. Two articles in the Women's Art Journal seek to identify the work of two artists in a formalist framework. Colleen Skidmore (1992) shows how the work of Dorothy Knowles meshes with Greenbergian criticism within a feminine sensibility. Katherine B. Krum (1993) reviews the work of Pat Lipsky Sutton to show how a female artist addresses formalism.

The introduction of feminist criticism in classroom instruction is a major change. Laurie Hicks' (1992) methodology of feminist criticism involves art instruction that (a) describes and ascribes meaning to the visual characteristics of the work; (b) compares images that have either similar or different views of women to explore beliefs about women; (c) through dialogue, puts the visual representation into the "real" world of experience to understand how the image might have "real" world consequences; (d) seeks out and explores the contexts that elucidate the production and viewing of art; and (e) takes action on the results of the critical analyses by offering methods to represent women in new ways. By using Hicks' methodology as
an indicator of feminist criticism applied in the classroom, the 90s emerges as the generative period for change.

Aesthetics

Searching for aesthetic theory in women's art literature is rarely fruitful. For example, using Mutiny and the Mainstream as a general guide to popular feminist thought of the past two decades, the only mention of aesthetics is a male quoting the familiar cliche, "Aesthetics is to art as ornithology is to birds..." (Seigle, 1993, p. 127). This suggests that many politically active feminists—women who often rely on collaborative action—have not overtly contributed to the development of a feminist art aesthetic that is generally inclusive. The dilemma is that while feminists object to male aesthetic systems that omit the experience of women, women have not developed the inclusive aesthetics that can address all artists.

What aesthetic stances have women taken during the past two decades? An inordinate number of women artists (and perhaps women in general) have subscribed to the aesthetic stance of Foucault that the self is to be developed like a work of art (Foucault, 1984). Although enticing, this particular aesthetic position is not compatible with social collaboration. The effect of such an aesthetic is to focus on the individual's inner development. It reinforces the tendency of feminism to aestheticize problems related to forms of subordination (McNay, 1992). Developing certain aesthetic directions in relation to women's experience are counterproductive. The self as art objectifies self and suggests becoming an object of beauty. One might say that the aesthetics of Foucault and feminist art theory are antithetical.

However, there are exceptions. The first exception comes from academic feminists who have produced aesthetic theory in the psychoanalytic criticism of art—particularly scopophilia: a gendered and eroticized aesthetic position (Korsmeyer, 1993). Such development seems appropriate since to explore feminist aesthetics involves the exploration of female experience—a gendered and sometimes eroticized experience. Carolyn Korsmeyer (1993) writes that a traditional, unified theory of aesthetics that considered questions such as What is beauty? and What is art? has crumpled under the challenge of feminist scholarship and the challenge to claims about universal human nature. Still, without providing a universal theory, feminist critics do not actually change the discipline. Working in this direction, Korsmeyer (1993) does propose that the topic of pleasure be reexamined because it spans feminist theory and traditional foundations of aesthetics, and because gender position needs to be articulated as the scientific theory of consciousness develops.

Griselda Pollock (1988) finds aspects of scopophilia useful in developing aesthetic theory. She writes that scopophilia is love of looking that, according to Freud, derives from the pleasure taken by the incompetent and immobile infant in imagining control over another by subjecting them—the others—to a controlling gaze. The combination of scopophilia and fetishism builds up the beauty of the object and transforms it into something satisfying in itself.

A second exception comes from work by Suzi Gablik who proposes a more collaborative model of aesthetics. She writes that presently aesthetics is not defined by "creative participation" (Gablik, 1991, p. 60). Current aesthetics is defined by the modernist notions of autonomy, separatism, and the self. The value of modern aesthetics resides in the object itself, with no concern for context or meaningful connections. As George Baselitz stated, "The artist is not responsible to anyone. His social role is asocial;... It is the end product which counts, in my case, the picture" (cited in Gablik, 1991, p. 61). This present attitude favors an intellectual approach over intuitive wisdom, individualism over integration, and competitiveness over cooperation. According to Gablik, in order to deal with our society and world, a new consciousness or model is needed; one that is perceived in terms of relationship, interconnectedness, and participation. Gablik notes that a very different kind of art is slowly emerging that deals with these issues. She believes that women have a different way of seeing the world and portraying it through their art; that women are more interested in creating bonds and building bridges, whereas men identify with the male
ethos of the artist as genius. Artists such as Mierle Ukeles are presenting aesthetic forms that create dialogues, interaction, and feelings for others. Her art forms create a different female energy pattern; one that transforms an alien audience into an empathic one; relating and weaving together rather than critical distancing. This new aesthetic will require changing the modern aesthetic by exploring a new openness with personal relationships. Gablik concludes, "Partnership is an idea whose time has come" (1991, p. 75).

Perhaps a model for the connectedness of objects to life activities and community is suggested by the aesthetics of small-scale societies. Layton (1991) describes many societies that have an appreciation of form and criteria for judging artworks. These criteria are often related to the effectiveness of the form in producing particular effects, such as prolific yam growing. Yet even knowing the instrumental purpose of small-scale societies' art, some anthropologists expressed a belief in a universal criteria of beauty because their judgment of good artworks were so similar to those of members of the small-scale society which they were studying (Layton, 1991, pp. 7-17).

In conclusion, because of the self reflective nature of aesthetic experience, feminist aesthetic theory has not developed significantly toward unified theory as women have entered the field of aesthetics. However, the pairing and combining of feminist thought with the work of male and female scientists who are unraveling mental consciousness may provide the foundation for a universal, normative, aesthetic theory. Developing such a theory will require more collaboration between cognitive scientists and women in art fields.

Art History

The discipline of art history was one of the touchstones that radicalized the art world. This discipline has changed most vitally due to the work of women historians. The cry-to-arms

1Here we mean the scientific study of the nature of consciousness and not the political action of consciousness raising.

began with the realization in the 1970s that the college art textbook The History of Art by H.W. Janson covered 25,000 years of art without mentioning a single woman artist. Changes in recording art historical events created an expanded art history that critically considered the context in which art was made and the equally crucial context in which fine art was identified. Productive research and writing in this area has readily emerged since women historians have increased in numbers and have created new texts that affirm and record the pluralistic nature of visual art creation. Anthony F. Janson has become the new editor of the once infamous textbook. He now includes women artists within new editions of the text.

Women art historians have advanced universal theory in the history of art. Germaine Greer (1979) and Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock (1981) were in the vanguard of unraveling the socioeconomic nature of art production for women. In Feminism and Art History, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard brought together an exemplary collection of art historical papers that questioned the litany of the very foundations of art history. They write that feminism and the historical discovery of women has had the effect of first broadening the discipline by way of rediscovery and reevaluation of the achievements of women artists and, secondly, of posing fundamental questions for art history as a humanistic discipline. Finally, a recognition of the distortions that sexual bias has imposed upon the creation and interpretation of art emerged.

A second form of historicism since the 1970s might be characterized as understanding how and for whom visual images create knowledge. Margaret R. Miles has produced such a book in Image as Insight wherein she explores the use of visual images in the early Christian church (1985). One of her major themes is the interpretation of the images of women in fourteenth century Tuscan painting. In her study she articulates the flexibility of language and its use in dialogue to develop interpretation of visual images. She shows how semiotic analysis renders new meaning of these Christian images to both men and women. Her

2Hence the question posed by Parker and Pollock cited above in the art criticism section.
presentation illustrates how collaboration in the form of dialogue builds a foundation of knowledge and how visual images constitute the substructure for that dialogue.

Marcia Hall (1992) has written an inclusive text that explores physical materials, perception, art theory and expression, and historic events in an interpretive analysis of artworks. This integrated approach to art history which utilizes scientific analysis may provide a more holistic knowledge base for art educators. In the arts, the focus on current political isolationism and deconstruction weakens the potential for fully understanding the iconography and environmental origins of the art object. Scholarship in iconography from a phenomenological approach on behalf of women’s vision and production will create feminist knowledge. Consideration of the physical and psychological experience of artworks enables viewers to understand artworks, artists, and the world as authentic as well as political. The integrated, holistic approach developed by Hall has the potential to provide a comprehensive ecological foundation for understanding art production.

Art Production

Edmund B. Feldman (1982) has described women artists as hyphenated artists, that is, women-artists. The implication is that women artists are not noteworthy according to universal criteria, but only as compared to other women artists. Unfortunately, the reality imposed by socioeconomic conditions has had the effect of insuring that fewer women than men have the autonomy to create large bodies of art work. The difficulty that women have encountered in creating environments that encourage their creative work impedes their ability to develop many artworks that might reach a large audience—and perhaps more easily meet universal criteria.

In an attempt to remediate this socioeconomic reality, women’s art cooperatives were organized in the 1970s to make opportunities for women to create, exhibit, and sell their work, and for women to dialogue and develop theory. However, true to women’s pluralist, cooperative nature, most of these intellectual and economic havens soon were opened to more diverse artists. The pluralist inclusion also occurred since funding was more readily acquired when larger populations were served.

One way to maximize one’s production is to collaborate with others. During the 1970s many women explored collaborative artwork. One leader of the feminist art movement, Mary Beth Edelson, co-created pieces with many individuals who cooperatively development and sometimes presented an idea. For example, in 1973 Edelson created a one-person exhibition by asking many of her Washington, DC art acquaintances for art ideas. Taking the concepts, Edelson created visual works that represented her interpretation of the ideas. Each of the works and the collaborators was represented in the catalog that accompanied the art exhibition. Some years later she traveled to campuses around the United States creating performance pieces that required the collaboration of the academic institutions, the faculty, and students.

Collaborative action in art making was explored to an extraordinary degree by Judy Chicago in both the Dinner Party (1978) and The Birth Project (1985). Women and men assisted Chicago in both the design and fabrication of these pieces. Occasionally the very activity of collaboration was criticized negatively in relation to these works—a criticism that has rarely been given to the work of male artists many of whom engage in similar production (Lippard, 1984). Both The Dinner Party and The Birth Project represent monumental efforts in the representation of women’s experience, knowledge, and craft. But neither of the pieces has found permanent museum locations. Most recently The Dinner Party was gifted to the University of the District of Columbia in 1990 as a centerpiece for multicultural education. The work was rejected by the faculty and the student body of that institution due to the belief spread by Pat Robertson supporters that it would take resources from education (Richardson, 1992).

In the late 1980s, some women artists such as Teresa Norton embraced collaboration as a creative method that might lead, eventually, to monumental public art—an area art historians have not recognized, but women artists have explored...
Working collaboratively with male architect Harp, Norton proposed a 30 million dollar monument to honor Women in Military Service for America. The piece was proposed for the gate to Arlington Cemetery called the McKim, Mead, and White Hemicycle. Norton won the first stage of the competition, and her proposal is a runner-up for the final monument. Her experience represents a new type of collaboration—women working collaboratively with men on projects of benefit to women. These types of partnerships can contribute to substantive art and design change in the next century.

In Europe, Magdelena Abakanowiz often works in collaboration with others. Although she works with fabric and the serial forms sometimes associated with women sculptors, her work is a protest against human cruelty and indifference, and human fear of self victimization (Beckett, 1988).

Taking another position, Linda Klinger (1991) questions the use of collaboration as a useful strategy for poststructural feminist artists. She raises the point that the identity of the woman is neutralized through collective action.

Collaboration, or collective action, is a particularly informative model to examine for early feminist ideas regarding authorship. Pedagogically, it was a strategy used to strengthen the ego and self-awareness of the female artist; practically speaking, it became a method by which to expand resources and remaneuver the limits of process. (Klinger, 1991, p. 45)

Klinger goes on to say that the tactics of collaboration and cooperation serve to demystify the persona of the artist and to expand the content of the work. In this way, the individual artist speaks with and for a larger community. Yet Klinger remains unconvinced by this political force of collaboration. She feels the tactic erases the individual genius of the artist and cancels the uniqueness of the artist’s hand.

For the most part, successful women artists in the field today work from a political base. The imagery that they create reflects established, accepted norms of mainstream visual communication. The message of their work is political. Jennie Holtzer, Suzanne Lacy, and Leslie Labowitz represent some of the ideas and issues of this aspect of women’s artwork.

The problems encountered by women artists are not unique to the visual arts. Intellectual activity is often thought to be more appropriate for men. Knowers are self-sufficient, and objects of knowledge are independent and separate. Knowledge is a privilege value (Code, 1991, p. 110). Because women’s art is often categorized as art only if it reflects political action, women’s art production still is not valued outside of its political function. One may suggest that new art theory that includes the products of both men and women will identify the relation of the artist to the art work in a manner somewhat analogous to the knower in relation to knowledge. Still in the 1990s art and knowledge are both thought to be the provenance of men.

Elizabeth Chaplain (1994) writes that most feminist art is figurative or scripto-visual because these two modes are most successful in confronting the viewer with feminist ideas. If, for the purposes of this paper, we consider dialogue to be a collaborative venture between the artist and the viewer, then the scripto-visual works of feminists can be considered collaborative works.

One may explore the analogy between art and knowledge in relation to painting. The artist actively searches for visual order. The painting is an epistemic result of the inquiry of the artist. The act of painting, art making, or image making in general, has been and continues to be dominated by males. By convention few women have been admitted into the art academy that creates visual form. That is, few women have been afforded the privilege of creating knowledge in visual art. Some women in the United States have been afforded the freedom of political

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action and the representation of that action through art, but the forms of that creation assume traditionally accepted male-created formats. Until women’s experience and thought is recognized as real and integrated, or reconciled with male experience, women’s art production will not be valued outside of the social and political context in which it was made.

In summary, this study of women’s work in the disciplines of art shows that women’s artworks and methods of working utilizes active collaboration, not just in the political arena of the art world, but also in the development of academic dialogues and discovery. The study suggests that as more women have economic success and enter the visual arts fields a more complex rendition of human experience will emerge.

Part II: Has Collaboration Brought About a Change Within Visual Art Institutions?

In answer to this question, one initially proclaims “yes.” By working together women in both the United States and Europe have gained entrance into visual art institutions to which previously only males had access. In Paris in 1881, Mme. Léon Bertaux organized women artists so that they could improve their professional positions. She formed the *Sisters of the Brush*, a women’s cultural organization. By 1896, their work gained entrance for women to attend classes at the *Ecole des Beaux-arts* (Garb, 1994). In the United States, Mary Ann Stankiewicz and Enid Zimmerman (1985) note that in the nineteenth century, higher education for women was rare and advanced degrees were almost unknown. Collaboration was an essential factor in the success of nineteenth century women art professionals.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States, *Dame Schools* provided women visual education and established the connection between women and the decorative arts. In these organizations, women learned to paint on velvet, embroider cloth, and create watercolors. The educational focus was to develop skills to create an attractive home environment (Plummer, 1979). Women’s clubs, based on cooperative and collaborative social interaction, provided training that promoted personal growth. The American notion that women are the nation’s cultural custodians was popular, and women’s clubs fostered this idea. Women did have a say in the direction of art education in public schools (McCarthy, 1991).

For example, art educator Mary Dana Hicks Prang collaborated with J.S. Clark and J.C. Locke to explicate the materials of industrial art designer Walter Smith. Her work made a great contribution to the growth of her husband’s business the Prang Educational Company from 1879 to 1900. The company provided much of the art education curricular materials for students in the United States. The Prang Company had offices in New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, London, Berlin, and Melbourne. In addition to working for her husband, Mary Prang worked in the civic arena with both the schools and the women’s clubs to foster art education in the public schools (Stankeiwicz, 1985).

Women leaders in the field of art education, particularly higher education, are often characterized as having a social consciousness (Stankeiwicz & Zimmerman, 1985). Since many of these women began as artists (a career that requires focus on oneself) and moved into education (a career that focuses on others) it is easy to see how collaboration was a major trait that successful women in this field possessed. Their ability to collaborate with their students has been exemplified by Mary Rouse. She made lasting relationships with her students, opening career doors for them (Stankeiwicz and Zimmerman, 1985). In the case of Rouse (1967) an equally notable achievement was her research on art programs (i.e., *Art Programs in Negro Colleges*) in predominately black colleges during the early 1960s. Her work easily contributed to a more complex rendition of human experience at a time when such work was not popular.

How the Institutions of Art Have Changed

Has collaboration brought about a change within visual art institutions? Given the histories of women in art such as those in the introduction to this section, one can answer yes. Women
have gained entrance to visual art institutions; women have created visual art education materials for schools; and women have studied the forms of art education in higher education. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that, through collaborative effort, women such as Mary Dana Hicks Prang and Mary Rouse were among the leaders who changed art education in the United States.

However, taking a broader overview, one needs to respond that these women were working in areas that are marginal and often at risk in the general curriculum. Art education as a field in higher education is a stepchild that floats between schools of education and schools of art. In fact, visual art education as public school content area initially was omitted from the United States governors' educational goals for the year 2000. One can demonstrate the marginality of the visual arts by looking at a mundane example of the relation of women in the fine arts to general culture in the United States. Looking for any trace of women in visual arts at the start of this decade in the 1990 Information Please Almanac leads one to the Entertainment and Culture section and a glossary of art movements. Twenty seven art movements are listed, the earliest being Baroque and others including Beaux Arts, Op Art, and Black or Afro-American Art. The only woman artist specifically named is Louise Nevelson as a practitioner of Assemblage. In the same section, Entertainment and Culture, over sixty women are named as winners of the Miss America pageant (1990 Information Please Almanac). The reader may wonder if these women are meant to represent entertainment or culture.

Institutions and the 1970s Feminist Art Movement

In 1992, Arlene Raven, a New York art historian, created a twenty-year timeline of the feminist art movement for Ms. Magazine. Most of the events were in some way related to institutions. Women were either trying to effect change in established institutions or to create new institutional forms to meet their needs. The events on the timeline were the result of extraordinary collaborative effort: the picketings of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Corcoran Gallery of Art; the First National Conference for Women in the Visual Arts held at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the University of Maryland; the development of A.I.R. (Arts in Residence) Gallery and the Feminist Art Studio in New York City; the Feminist Art Program of California Institute of the Arts organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro; and the organization of the Women Caucus on Art and the National Art Education Association Women's Caucus. Unfortunately, like many other fine art events, these and hundreds of other activities seem to have little impact on the mainstream culture in the United States.

Historically, the unequal representation of women in visual art units of higher education can be shown by the following: (a) In 1972-73, 40% of all studio degrees were awarded to women, but only 22% of the faculty in institutions awarding the degrees were women; (b) in 1972-74, 49% of the recipients of a Ph.D. in art history were women, but only 22% of the academic positions in art history in higher education were held by women and only 14% of these were tenured positions; and (c) in 1975, there were 16,193 recipients of bachelor's degrees in art (studio and art history combined) and of these 10,901 were women, that is, fully two-thirds of the art students successfully completing degree requirements were women (Brodsky, 1979). Looking at the percentages today, they have not increased very much. In 1987, the percentage of full-time instructional faculty in the fine arts in higher education was 26% female and 74% male. In 1991-92, there were 19,928 recipients of bachelor's degrees in the fine arts and of these, 13,479 were women, and of the 149 doctoral degrees in the fine arts, 99 of them were female recipients (Digest of Education Statistics, 1994, p. 257). The professional success of these women can be estimated roughly by how many of them at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the University of Maryland; the development of A.I.R. (Arts in Residence) Gallery and the Feminist Art Studio in New York City; the Feminist Art Program of California Institute of the Arts organized by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro; and the organization of the Women Caucus on Art and the National Art Education Association Women's Caucus. Unfortunately, like many other fine art events, these and hundreds of other activities seem to have little impact on the mainstream culture in the United States.
Collaborative Efforts in Art Education by Women in the Nordic Countries

Swedish artist and art teacher Iris Kronbeck stated that in 1945 only men were artists (personal communication, July, 1994). Now in 1994, women artists are blooming in Sweden. Some are self-taught and others attend art schools often through adult education courses. Women in Sweden have also founded collective galleries. For example, a mile or so outside of Angelholm, Sweden, a group of five women care for a small gallery that shows and sells their work. Articles of clothing, prints, paintings, ceramics, woodwork, and knitting are sold in the gallery. Kronbeck, who is also a painter, printmaker, and part of this collaborative group, said that she feels that women’s work is facilitated when women are able to show their works together. She feels that women artists work more cooperatively than male artists (I. Kronbeck, personal communication, July, 1994).

Over the past 20 years, there has been an increase in the numbers of women enrolled in art and design schools and there has been an increase in the number of women who participate in art and design. Sigrid Eckhoff, one of four or five women who have successfully entered the Norwegian industrial design profession, states that she is making a change in the way that things are designed (personal communication, July, 1994). She works collaboratively with people from many different fields. For example, in her design of children’s footwear she used knowledge from ergonomics to construct and design the forms. She studied how children thought about their feet and used that information in the design of the new product. She changed the colors of shoes that were water protective. She said that since the shoes were to be worn in a cold, dark climate, she designed them to be light, white, and comfortable. Her product has had considerable success (S. Eckhoff, personal communication, July, 1994).

Finnish landscape architect, Anneli Ruohonen, says that there are more Finnish women teachers in Finnish schools, but art theory in general has not changed. She estimates that women comprise 60% to 70% of students in Finnish art schools. Although she is satisfied with theory in her field, she asserts that there should be more public education in landscape architecture (A. Ruohonen, personal communication, July, 1994).

A Brief Case Study: Italian Women in Art

In consideration of the development of the feminist art movement, it may be useful to reflect on a brief chronicle of its development in a single country. The following material derives from an interview with Pia Candinas, Director of Women’s Studies in Italy at Temple University, in Rome, in July 1994. The general question to which Pia Candinas responded was “How have women changed art education in Italy?” As in the United States, the account shows that collaborative activity between women is more likely to reach a political objective. Once the objective is attained and collaboration is required in the broader community, success is more difficult to achieve.

The women’s movement has brought few direct changes to Italian academic organization. For instance, Temple University, an American university in Rome, has the only women’s studies program in higher education in Italy. There have been organized attempts to bring more women into higher education. In the 1970s, the Centocinquantina sponsored by FIAT and other large companies and labor unions, changed education to some extent. The program permitted women to attend university courses for 150 hours. Feminists of the period used this as a window of opportunity to design and teach women’s studies courses to working class women. The Centocinquantina educational program was a sign of the political vitality of the country in the 1970s. However, in the 1990s, there are no Italian academic programs devoted to women’s issues. Instead, many of the women who teach in Italian universities are feminists, and they develop and publish material related to women’s topics (P. Candinas, personal communication, July, 1994).

During the past twenty years the feminist movement penetrated Italian politics. Women’s political progress was the
major factor in developing the concept of self determination for women and in obtaining legalization of abortion and divorce in Italy—a difficult feat in a predominately Catholic country. While these social objectives were being realized, there was a significant amount of interest in collaborative political work for women, but the goal of that work, a women’s political party, never obtained credibility. At one point, however, the women’s movement was so powerful that it actually caused one government to resign. By 1994, many more women participate in the Italian government. Perhaps increased participation has occurred because of new regulations that require political parties to present an equal number of male and female candidates.

Once the major social objectives were achieved, the women’s movement and the collaboration that it generated lost momentum. It is not anticipated that there will be a rise in the number of women’s studies programs in Italy. Academic women who might have the expertise to lead such programs must expend energy fighting for equitable salaries and suitable working conditions.

Temple University Women’s Studies program organized by Pia Candinas does not promote any particular political or academic agenda, but rather explores feminist thinking in the fields of literature, history, psychology, politics, and especially the arts. However, the program is also responsive to timely political issues. In the fall of 1993, Candinas organized a series of lectures that explored the political changes bought about by the *Operazioni mani pulite*, an investigation into the use of public money.4

In the spring of 1994, the program returned to its more familiar practice of addressing questions of culture by presenting a series of lectures by artists and art historians. In her introduction to this lecture series, Candinas called attention to one of the contributions that feminists theorists world over have uncovered, that is, art history is a representational practice.

Candinas’ account shows how Italian feminist institutions, such as a women’s studies program in art, are affected by other feminist political actions. As Candinas’ program moves between presentations of cultural and political leaders, she indirectly changes the image of women in Italy. She weaves powerful politicians who have created social change together with women artists and art historians who seek to create cultural changes. This collaboration might serve as a model for women in art.

**Summary: Has Collaboration Effected Changes in the Art Academies?**

A simple answer to effects of collaboration is not possible. Historically in the United States, women, through collaborative efforts, have played significant roles in the development of the visual arts, but their actions remain in the periphery of popular culture. Secondly, as a result of women’s collaborative political action, most art institutions in the United States and Europe have more women participating as faculty and students than ever before. But the participation is still at a low level. Within some institutions, governance has changed to create a supportive environment for women. For example, some institutions have changed to include mentoring and collegiality (Swoboda, 1990). However, the institutions have initiated this type of action, not the visual arts units of these institutions. Further, collaboration on creative works is not necessarily rewarded by tenure and promotion committees. Dr. Patricia Amburgy concluded that throughout her experiences in higher education over the last decade, the system does not promote or reward collaborative efforts (personal communication, March, 1994). In her experiences as a professor, the only recognized collaboration in her department was team-teaching two courses with female colleagues. She stated that the emphasis in higher education appears to be on a “me first” attitude, setting up a competitive

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4 During this series, Carol Beebe Tarantelli, the first American citizen elected to the Italian parliament, gave a presentation entitled “1993: An Italian ‘Revolution’: the Passage from the First to the Second Republic” and Antonella Picchio, a founder of the Italian feminist group National Organization of Autonomous Women [ONDA] spoke on “The Market, the State and the Moral Question” and Luciana Castellina, a founder of the daily newspaper II Manifesto and the new left-wing party the “Rifondazione comunista” spoke on “Post Cold-War Italy: Corruption, Reform, and Democracy.”
approach versus a collaborative one. Amburgy did remark that women faculty as a whole tend to want to do what’s right for their program, what’s best for the collective good, whereas men tend to want “to win.” She also agreed with the assertion that the quality of participation in higher education does not go beyond a certain level. As a case in point, women as directors and deans of schools are few and far between; most women fill the lower end positions at universities. She contended that those women who do succeed in the world of art have to “buy into the system.” For example, artists such as Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger have to turn to self-promotion, “me first,” in order to make it in the system, and still there are no women artists that have “star status” like Jasper Johns (P. Amburgy, personal communication, March, 1994).

H.T. Niceley (1992) has written about the development of women art professionals. She describes the current situation in the following way:

Doors have been open, closed and slightly ajar for women artists. The flux and flow of the art establishment and of public opinion have not been constant. Prospects for the nineties seem to me to be brighter for equal inclusion of women artists in all facets of the art establishment. (p. 13)

Conclusion

In the visual arts, women have been most successful using collaborative action to obtain political goals. The structure of art education has altered as a result of changes in the content of criticism and art history. Many of these content changes were initiated by collaborative dialogues and studies that revealed women’s life experiences. However, the administrative structures of most institutions remain the same and collaborative efforts are not usually rewarded.

Collaboration as a creative strategy is more problematic. Some women have been very successful in creating monumental art works through collaborative efforts. However, some theorists are beginning to view collaboration in creative expressions as counterproductive because the constrains of collaboration minimize the artists identities. Nevertheless, if one is willing to view public dialogue and discourse as a collaborative effort, then collaboration continues to be essential to the development of new feminist artistic theory in aesthetics, criticism, art history, and art production.

References


**Author Note**

Dr. Cynthia Bickley-Green is an assistant professor of Art Education at East Carolina University. Support for the interviews with European women was provided by the Graduate School of East Carolina University.

Dr. Anne G. Wolcott is the Fine Arts Coordinator for Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Department of Instructional Services, Virginia Beach, VA. Virginia Beach City Public Schools Department of Instruction contributed assistance in developing aspects of this paper.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Cynthia Bickley-Green, East Carolina University, School of Art, Greenville, North Carolina, 27858.


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**Gómez-Peña, Guillermo (1993).**

_Warrior for Gringostroika: Essays, Performance Texts, and Poetry_


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Connie M. Landis

Usually I doubt the back cover affidavits (always positive in nature) found on most books and I eagerly read the book to ascertain whether my suspicions are warranted. The five “praise-songs” in this case, some written for his solo performances and others for the book itself, however, are on the mark. Now having critically consumed the book, I am convinced that this is a “must read” for anyone interested in the social, political, and psychological aspects of the contemporary art scene as related to the new internationalism.

Gómez-Peña’s original ideas—finding shape in such diverse forms as manifestoes, conceptual postcards, letters, posters, critical, performance and poetical texts, among other formats—retain strong impact in this written and illustrated book. The spirit and angst of his words and actions originally performed in space and time for twenty years are convincingly captured as
he graphically crosses and recrosses the borders of Mexico and the United States. It is indeed a borderless world in which “geographic borders have collapsed and language barriers have been disintegrated by gringostroika” as Laura Jamison (Mother Jones, back cover of book) writes.

Border crossing becomes to Gómez-Peña a way of life, ever-present fodder for conscious and unconscious thought to be transformed into the visual and literary arts. He is known through his writing in Mexico where apparently writers are respected. In the United States “where writers are marginalized,” writing gives way to performance art which is, according to Gómez-Peña, “above all a strategy of social communication and an exercise in cultural translation” (p. 16). Writing and performance art, at least as far as a book format can carry the idea and spirit of performance art, are synthesized in this book. Synthesized in the philosophical deductive reasoning process of particular parts creating a complex whole, from principles to applications in living, from causes to effects and consequences gleaned from Gómez-Peña’s experiences.

A perusal of the “Contents” pages indicates four main divisions to the book: Critical Texts, Performance Texts, Performance Chronology, and Sin (or without)/Translation. Indicative of the insightful and piercing nature found throughout this book, the bottom border of the Contents pages reads in all caps, “I AM THEREFORE I CROSS.” Immediately below this statement is a two-page blazing red border proclaiming “MY RATIONALE FOR CROSSING IS SIMPLE: SURVIVAL + DIGNITY = MIGRATION - MEMORY GRAFFITI (SAN DIEGO, 1983).” This formulated expression at the book’s beginning informs the reader immediately that something provocative and value-testing is between the covers.

Sub-topics under the four divisions are arranged as the author explains in “a somewhat chronological manner” (p. 15). In what serves as the book’s introduction (ingeniously titled “1991-A Binational Performance Pilgrimage”), Gómez-Peña states:

This text chronicles two decades of projects, trips, and social and cultural phenomena that shaped the consciousness and sensibility of my generation. ... the reader must keep in mind that some of the projects I talk about took place simultaneously and were related conceptually to other projects that were also taking place at the same time in different cities of the Southwest and the East Coast of the U. S. A. (p. 15)

Over 35 illustrated pages, mostly photographic excerpts from performance works and rubber-stamped images from unknown sources, suggest in an unnerving way the unusual perspectives that Gómez-Peña offers to the reader. Having heard and seen Gómez-Peña give a slide presentation about his various artworks before reading the book, I was surprised how the book’s selected and understandably limited images managed to capture the main issues of his life and artwork to this point. Primary red accents were adroitly scattered among the book’s black and white images: this reminded me of the importance that red played in the slides taken during performance pieces. And although it may seem frivolous to set up connections between photos in slide form from his performance art pieces, along with black and white book images, and an actual performance piece, the links were there imaginatively for this reader.

Born in Mexico City in 1955 and now living in New York and California, Gómez-Peña has always lived between ever-changing multiple communities in geographic space, time contexts, and cultural values. And with what he describes as “my Mexican psyche, my Mexican heart, and my Mexican body” (p. 15), he transports himself across these borders in his cultural commentaries delivered through performance art pieces or expressed more theoretically through his written pieces. He describes his self-selected multidimensional perspectives in these statements:

I crisscross from the past to the present, from the fictional to the biographical. I fuse prose and poetry,
sound and text, art and literature, political activism and art experimentation. As a result I find myself working with hybrid genres and interdisciplinary formats. My works are simultaneously essays and manifestoes, performances and social chronicles, bilingual poems and radio or video pieces. In them I try to exercise all the freedom that my countries have denied me. (p. 16)

With a chameleon-like identity befitting his place at the moment and claimed by a strong sense of where he originated and how he evolved, he addresses topics most of us deny or set aside for when-the-time-and-energy for considering. For many, these opportunities never materialize and major prejudices—racial, occupational, religious, among others—as well as predilections based on personal backgrounds are seldom addressed. Even partialities favoring certain objects, methods or thoughts drift in and out without close examination. In the book Gómez-Peña forces the reader to examine and reexamine individual choices and perspectives, whatever the involvement or topic of the moment. He invites the reader into culture-making that includes his vision along with that of others. He very clearly states what he seeks and doesn’t seek:

We (Latinos in the United States) don’t want to be a mere ingredient of the melting pot. What we want is to participate actively in a humanistic, pluralistic, and politicized dialogue, continuous and not sporadic, and we want this to occur between equals who enjoy the same power of negotiation. (p. 41)

And trite as it may seem, the experiences are individually rewarding as societal fissures, cavities, and real and imagined boundaries are probed and poked from different perspectives instigated by Gómez-Peña throughout Warrior for Gringostroika.

In summary I highly recommend this book for Social Theory Caucus members and others interested in social, political and multicultural issues surrounding marginalized individuals and groups. In a classroom situation—probably graduate level—I predict discussions, papers, projects and other selected undertakings will take unanticipated turns and twists which should be what art educators search for and all too seldom find. In private reading, an interior dialogue will undoubtedly begin which can’t be ignored, whatever one’s life focus. I would even suggest that a more socially and politically defined engagement in our professional and personal life will result.

AFTER THOUGHT: One poem near the end of the book has been selected to capture your imagination. The original spacing and type has been retained as much as possible:

**PUNCTURED TIRE**

*(HIGHWAY 5, CALIFORNIA, 1988)*

I am stuck in the middle of the journey  
a highway without human activity  
a text without visible structure  
life on this side of the border  
on your side . . .  
I no longer know who I am  
but I like it  

Diagonally underneath the poem on the same page are half inch upper case words stamped and framed in red ink: “WOUNDED BY THE MAINSTREAM” (p. 167).
Guadalupe Rivera and Marie-Pierre Colle (1994); Ignacio Urquiza, photographer
Frida's Fiestas: Recipes and Reminiscences of Life with Frida Kahlo
New York: Clarkson Potter/Publishers 224 pages; 101 color and black and white photographs; 8 reproductions of paintings; ISBN: 0-517-59235-5 (hardcover) $35.00

Elizabeth Garber

SQUASH BLOSSOM BUDÍN
(12 servings)

FILLING
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 tablespoons/ 30 g butter
2 pounds/ 1 k squash blossoms, stems and pistils removed and discarded, blossoms chopped
salt and pepper
1 1/2 cups pureed and drained tomatoes
10 ounces/ 300 g panela or Oaxaca cheese, grated (or muenster)
1 1/2 cups/ 375 ml heavy cream

CREPES
4 tablespoons/ 60 g melted butter
6 eggs
3/4 cup/ 100 g flour
3/4 cup/ 180 ml milk
salt
2 tablespoons/ 30 g butter

Frida's Fiestas is a cookbook and (as the subtitle names) a book of reminiscences that bears some resemblance to Laura Esquivel's recent best selling novel Como agua para chocolate. Both are books of stories that interweave with food, and both give recipes that enhance the sensory experience of their stories. In Frida's Fiestas, Guadalupe Rivera, daughter of muralist Diego Rivera and co-author of this book, has collected her memories of living for a period during her teen years with Frida Kahlo and her father. The memories form vignettes of an outing to Xochimilco, the floating gardens outside of Mexico City; of the celebration of Las Posadas, the reenactment of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter in Bethlehem that is a yearly Christmas ritual in Mexico and the southwestern United States; of the Day of the Dead (All Souls Day in the United States and Europe, but much more elaborately celebrated), and so forth, one for each month of the year. Accompanying these vignettes of life with Frida and Diego are the recipes for the foods that were so much a part of the sensory experience of these occasions.

If you are among those who enjoy reading cookbooks, perhaps at bedtime but not meal-planning time, you will especially enjoy the format of this book. In addition to the stories and recipes, there are sumptuous pictures of the foods in traditional Mexican potteries that Kahlo loved, garnished with flowers, sensuous fruits and vegetables arranged as Kahlo arranged them in her still lifes. The Blue House in Coyoacán and other of Kahlo's frequented places are in the background. If you
wish to actually prepare some of the dishes, the recipes are traditional central Mexican cuisine and feature an abundance of fresh foods. Oddly, however, their presentation as recipes lacks the flourish and detail for which Kahlo was known and that is conveyed in the stories and the photographs. Directions are minimal. The table of contents is structured around events and not the food (you must turn the index or to each chapter to find what recipes are included). And if you don’t know what huazontles (a wild green) are, or chorizo (sausage), or zapote (a winter fruit native to tropical America), it won’t be explained in these pages (although, oddly, substitutes are offered for some ingredients such as plantains and Mexican cheeses). These factors suggest an economic venture by both publisher and authors (much as is Margaret Wood’s A Painter’s Kitchen: Recipes from the Kitchen of Georgia O’Keeffe published by Red Crane Books in 1991) more than an art or social treatise.

Then what is the social import of such a book for the pages of this journal? On first glance, we might compare Rivera’s stories to those told around the fireside of yesteryear, and argue that their anecdotal nature has a kind of folk value. But although Kahlo surrounded herself with Mexican folk art and adopted many folk foods, wore folk dress, and paid homage to folkways, (as we all know by now) these were constructed. Still, some readers may enjoy Frida’s Fiestas on this level and all the more so if they are already familiar with the famous painter’s life and work.

Another level of understanding is that of food as women’s domain. This is where Esquivel’s novel comes back into focus. In each book, food is both art and gift and a means to bring people together. Frida’s kitchen is very famous and she is known to have entertained extravagantly (indeed, Rivera recalls that for one of Frida’s birthdays, she finished a commissioned painting in order to finance her party). Frida’s love for life and her passion for her husband are evident in the lusciousness of the foods, photographs, painting reproductions, and stories on the pages of the book, much as they entwine in the novel Como agua para chocolate. This entwining of love and food, set within women’s domain, might be interpreted by some readers as anti-feminist depending on the brand of feminism to which you subscribe. Drawing on the work of Simone de Beauvoir, Georgia Collins has argued that the “immanent” domains of traditional women’s work should not be discarded for the “transcendent” domains of the male world, but rather revalued. The daily tasks that are the least well paid are usually those that sustain us, that give life a sound argument, in my estimation, for their reevaluation. Lewis Hide argues in his book The Gift that art should be a gift, not a commodity. Food in the sense it is represented in Frida’s Fiestas has the wrappings and thought of a gift. It shows attention to formal elements of art such as color, shape, and texture. Food also brings people together, creating community. In this aspect, the book brings forth some of the cultural aspects of folk tradition.

If we are more prone to social analysis, we might ask why Frida-mania has caught on now in the United States. It might be the mainstreaming of a select few women’s accomplishments in the arts (the “sprinkle and stir” approach to women’s issues) or the psychologically egocentric aspect of many of Kahlo’s paintings that fits well with the continuing emphasis on self in this country. Certainly these two facets of Kahlo’s life, her womanhood and her egocentricity, are conveyed in the text of the book. The interest might also be attributed to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). Why not? As a kind of 15 minutes of fame, media attention turns our focus to wherever in the world U.S. Americans become involved. It is unlikely that Frida-mania is rooted in communism and social activism even though these concerns were a continuing focus of Kahlo’s and husband Rivera’s lives together and subject of some of Kahlo’s last paintings and diary entries.

If you want good, classical recipes of Mexican food, try one of Diana Kennedy’s well known books. If you want art, try a gallery, the art section of your local library, or a friend’s studio. But if you want a blend of food and art presented for leisurely consumption, this might be the book for you.