Vince Lanier once said in his inimitably leading way (with that gleam in his eye) that art is what hangs on the walls in the museums and galleries in New York and Los Angeles. Unfortunately, in light of the Art in America syndrome which dominates not only the art community but also seemingly the art education community, the joke may be on you, Vince. You may be right. Art reflects and perpetuates culture as does education. Culture, as an important aspect of human evolution must have a wide gene pool of ideas to maintain the healthy balance necessary for its continuance. Maybe that's the crucial function of alternative ideas such as those found in this journal: cultural balance insuring continued evolution. The Bulletin, which is often seen by mainstream art educators as the result of mutant genes, may help provide the genetic breadth necessary for survival of art education as a species. After all, it was genetic mutation which resulted in some puny little mammals when dinosaurs were dominant. So, for now, Vince, I'm afraid you might be right, but if you keep asking, if we all keep asking, some different answers may begin to evolve.

Once again this year, I'm indebted to Jerry Draper, Dean of the School of Visual Arts and Charles Dorn, Chair of Art Education, Florida State University, for their support of this journal. Editorial Assistant, Melissa E Smith, was invaluable once again, spending long hours processing and formatting Bulletin #8. The editorial board also performed way above and beyond reasonable expectations. Collectively they've been invaluable to me as editor. I think it's true, however, that power corrupts. In several of the articles presented in this issue, I've disagreed with some of the reviewers' decisions, and each time I disagreed, it went my way. So I think two years are enough. Before I get on a serious power trip, it's time to get me outta here.

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The Bulletin of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education is an annual publication of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education, an affiliate of The National Art Education Association. The Bulletin is available to Caucus members as a benefit of membership. Membership in the Caucus is $10.00 annually or five dollars for students. Individual copies of The Bulletin may be purchased for $6.00. Membership and Bulletin requests should be directed to Andra Johnson, Treasurer, Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education, Art Department, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, 30602.

Editorial Policy
The Bulletin is a refereed journal which accepts articles related to social theory and socially concerned practices in art and art education. Manuscripts should adhere to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association and should be submitted in triplicate. Critical commentary on practice and theory in the field is welcomed as well as reviews of socially-defined literature. All inquiries and manuscripts should be addressed to Tom Anderson, Editor, BCSTAE, 123 Education Building, The Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, 32306-3014. The deadline for submissions for Bulletin #9 is December 1, 1988.
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ARTICLES

Research for Existential Choice

Karen A. Hamblen

Chet Bowers (1984) has developed a theory of how a critical consciousness of our cultural typifications can be developed through an in-depth and elaborated understanding of aspects of a given situation or problem. In this paper, his theory is applied to the role research plays in art education. It is proposed that our existential choices in art education are directly proportionate to the amount and complexity of the research we have available and the extent to which we understand and can apply this research for specific purposes. The lack of research in essential instructional areas as well as the lack of formalized debate regarding major changes in the field of art education suggest that, rather than critical consciousness, art education is currently subject to limited perspectives that are controlled by a select few.

Major changes are occurring in art education at this time involving a shift from child-centered studio instruction to a more discipline-based focus involving those aspects considered intrinsic to the study of art. One might expect that diverse interpretations of discipline-based instruction would appear throughout the literature and that research efforts would be attempting to keep pace to provide theoretical and empirical rationales for proposed curriculum changes. Such, however, is not the case. Despite a flurry of activity in art education, surprisingly little formalized debate, conjecture, and examination of premises appear in the literature and little research has been conducted specific to discipline-based art education (Hamblen, 1987a). In this paper, the role research plays in extending or curtailing choices within the field of art education will be examined in relationship to Bowers' (1974; 1984) theory of critical consciousness in education.

Chet Bowers (1974; 1984) presents a theory of education in relationship to the sociology of knowledge that focuses on how, through socialization processes, a repertoire of knowledge is developed that constitutes one's cognitive structure. The human authorship of this cognitive structure is more or less obscured inasmuch as we are often unaware of the relativity and sources of our own cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs. Bowers' contribution to education lies in his discussion of how consciousness of our cultural typifications can be developed through an elaborated language code, i.e., we can become conscious and active participants in the construction of our personal and social realities when we examine our taken-for-granted stock of knowledge.

In this paper, the discussion will focus on the application of Bowers' theory to the role that research plays in art education. It will be proposed that research constitutes much of our professional stock of knowledge.1 Basic assumptions embodied in theory and research constitute art education's foundational knowledge and operational procedures in the history and philosophy of art education, the psychology of art, art curriculum development, and so on.2 It will also be proposed that research can
be used to reveal its own problematic nature and thereby empower us to participate in the creation as well as correction and refinement of our profession.

**Overview**

Most of the focus in art education writing, whether in the form of research or curricula, has been on elementary and secondary art instruction. Little attention has been given to university professionals' life worlds and the effect their decision-making processes have on the field of art education (Hamblen, 1986; Hamblen, 1987c). In relationship to Bowers' theory of existential choice, it is important that art educators understand the scope of their choices and the content and implications of those choices. Research in art education constitutes much of the substance of our professional concepts and actions inasmuch as research is often used to initiate practice and is itself a product of our educational priorities. When research choices are available and when we understand them to be choices and understand the implications of their applications, research can provide a way for us to examine, negotiate, and change major portions of our professional reality.

According to Bowers (1984), one's existential choice is expanded in direct "proportion to the complexity of the symbolic code the individual acquires" (p.47), i.e., an elaborated language code enables the individual to examine assumptions, premises, and biases. In this paper, it is proposed that our existential choices in art education are directly proportionate to the range and types of research we have available and the extent to which we understand and can manipulate our research. Our existential choices are limited to the extent our conceptual frameworks are restricted by, for instance, limited research, research that is not understood, or research presented without debate and acknowledgement of its biases.

In this paper I will discuss two ways research can be used as an active reality-constructing component of art education: (1) as providing choices and (2) as creating an area of heightened critical consciousness. Research, when done from a variety of perspectives and from a range of methodologies, provides choices for interpretation and action and empowers the art education professional to engage in the ongoing creation of the field. Also, when a range of research is available on particular issues in art education, the field itself can enter a period of heightened critical consciousness wherein previous conceptions are called into question and the human authorship of any one particular viewpoint is thrown into sharp relief. By providing choices and creating areas of heightened critical consciousness, research can provide an avenue wherein decisions are based on examined and debated participation rather than through the unilateral actions of a select few.

**Research Choices**

Bowers' (1974; 1984) discussion of how our repetoire of information is built up through socialization processes is consistent with major anthropological, sociological, and psychological theory. For example, Bruner (1958) discusses how we use hypotheses in problem solving. When confronted with a given problem, similar experiences are recalled for information on how to proceed. Hypotheses are then said to be formed and tested against the realities of the situation. The entire process of hypothesis formation, tentative testing, and evaluation, followed by the taking of some form of action, is often accomplished very quickly and subconsciously in the ongoing tasks of life. For example, hypothesis
testing is applied to the quickly resolved task of deciding whether it is safe to cross the street. Hypothesis testing can also be applied to the ongoing, lengthy, and conscious process of deciding which instructional content and methodologies are appropriate for a given student population. Those individuals having recourse to a range of hypotheses, either through past experiences or through formal education, can be expected to be more successful in their actions than those without such recourse. Accordingly, education can be described as a process whereby students acquire a repertoire of working hypotheses that have application in their culture or more specifically in their particular field of study.

Through graduate study, ongoing professional development, and instructional practices, prevailing research and theory become part of the art educator's working stock of knowledge, i.e., hypothesis testing repertoire. Research acts to build the art educator's repertoire of ongoing typifications, and one might suggest that those art educators who are most successful in a variety of educational situations have recourse to the broadest, most well-accepted theories and research findings. Within Bruner's (1958) theory, such art educators have recourse to a range of possible hypotheses. Within Bowers' (1984) theory, they are able to act successfully within the acceptable norms of their profession's expectations. Those art educators thoroughly conversant with the field have, to paraphrase Bowers, an elaborated research code and hence more choices for any given problem or situation.

The sheer amount of information possessed by an art educator is not, however, sufficient by itself for an ability to participate in the construction of art education realities. It is the consciousness of choice, the weighing of alternatives, and the explicit acknowledgment that one has engaged in a process of selection and interpretation that are the decisive factors which distinguish acting existentially from merely acting. Educators who merely have recourse to what currently exists in art education without consciousness of its implications and limitations are still operating within the natural attitude of taken-for-granted knowledge. For example, although much has been written about creativity, individualism, and self-expression in art education, these concepts are still often utilized primarily on an uncritical, taken-for-granted level. More recently, information on discipline-based art education (DBAE) has been likewise presented with little published discussion and debate on its more problematic aspects (Hamblen, 1987a). In this sense, a thorough knowledge of current DBAE literature would not necessarily result in an ability to exercise critical existential choice regarding the implementation of DBAE programs. One's operating hypotheses, though large in number, may be merely part of the corpus of mainstream ideas that have been presented programmatically. When acting within this stock of knowledge, the art educator is in effect being created by, rather than creating, the professional character of art education.

Jean Rush (1985) had described research as providing a form of "consumer protection" (p.195).

Research can:
lay out the relative merits of different approaches and reveal a range of curriculum options. Lacking this base of reference, teachers have to rely on choices that are made for them. [Rush calls for credible research] conducted from a variety of perspectives and a variety of
academic and foundational affiliations...[to] reveal the problematic nature of a given issue and present a range of choices (Hamblen, 1987a, p.73).

The critical stance of existential choice is contingent upon an ability to recognize art education theory and practice as humanly created choices with different types of applications and implications. An informed, existential access to research and theory is contingent upon an ability to examine historical origins and philosophical biases, to have recourse to alternative perspectives, to imagine other possibilities, and to develop conceptual distance.3 Bowers suggests that curricula need to be devised which will increase the options and hence competence of students in understanding and acting upon their assumptions. In a similar vein, Shulman (1986) describes educational professionals as those who not only act, but also know how and why they act as they do. Taking responsibility for the consequences of one's choice is integral to the existential, critical stance discussed by Bowers (1974; 1984).

In this paper, criteria for research choices are not specified either in regard to conducting or applying research. Within existential choice, criteria for selection and application are themselves variable and humanly constructed. I do, however, believe that research should be both conducted and selected according to criteria which foster choice and broad-based participation. Bowers (1984), for example, discusses curricula that tap students' phenomenological worlds, that offer alternative modes of problem solving, and that provide information reflective of our pluralistic society. In a similar manner, it is proposed that research from diverse points of view provide instances for existential choice by providing a more complex professional repertoire of meaning as well as by providing consciousness of that repertoire and its implications in terms of limitations and capabilities. Choice, as Apple (1979) notes, cannot be avoided. The exercising of choice is not synonymous with consciousness of choice nor does choice necessarily entail active participation in the construction of knowledge. Choices among art education research findings and theories are continually being made, but choices are more often than not exercised on a taken-for-granted level.

**Research for Liminal States of Critical Consciousness**

When research is available from a variety of perspectives and is subject to an ongoing debate that probes its complexities and philosophical biases, the problematic nature of research - and hence practice - is thrown into sharp relief. When these conditions are present, a liminal state of heightened critical consciousness is achieved. According to Bowers (1984), this is a time when meanings are renegotiated, and no single answer holds sway by virtue of tradition or authority. The human authorship of ideas and the sociopolitical implications of their possible application are revealed. "Existential choice is not grounded in the individual's accumulated recipe knowledge, but in those areas of liminality not already stabilized and depersonalized by the natural attitude" (Bowers, 1984, p.40).

Anthropologists, such as Turner (1974), have described how certain cultural rituals and practices can be used to gain a state of consciousness that reveals the under-
lying meanings of taken-for-granted behaviors. For the sciences, Kuhn (1970) has termed the liminal state as constituting revolutionary science. It is at such times that past and current scientific practices are questioned, the complexity and relativity of current theory are revealed, and a new framework of scientific investigation may be developed.

In art education there are liminal areas of varying intensity. Neither taken-for-grantedness or liminality are exclusive states of being. Some events in art education create heightened consciousness, such as the Pennsylvania State Conference of 1965 which fostered multiple lines of theory and research. For many years Lowenfeld's ideas on children's graphic expression were part of the taken-for-granted knowledge of many art educators. Although Lowenfeld's ideas continue to influence art education theory and practice, research by Pariser (1983) and Wilson and Wilson (1982), to name a few, have called many Lowenfeld's tenets into question. Controversy will, undoubtedly, continue in this area. In Kuhnian terms, a major paradigm shift has not yet occurred in our interpretations of children's graphic expressions. Within Bowers' (1984) theory, the meanings of children's graphic expressions continue to be negotiated.

Research from multiple perspectives that is open to a free flowing debate can be the impetus for a liminal state in art education. This is especially true when researchers themselves acknowledge the reality-shaping implications of their research in its presentation of particular selections and interpretations.

It is my contention that informed, democratic participation and responsibility for one's choices occur when there is a mix of information from a variety of perspectives that allows one to probe the merits of various lines of action. A liminal state does not provide clear cut answers, nor does it involve especially expedient or efficient processes. A liminal state is dependent on debate, criticism, and supposition, all of which are absent from much of education (Apple, 1979, Bowers, 1984). In general education, priorities placed on expediency, efficiency, and the consensus of selected experts has resulted in simplification, predictability, and severe distortions of the knowledge base. Murray L. Bob (1986) makes the important point that educators, and in particular administrators, need to accept the idea that educational decisions are often complex, multi-tiered, and time-consuming. There are no easy or final answers if education is to be responsive to our changing, pluralistic society.

Audible Silences in Art Education

Current developments in art education suggest that, rather than entering or being in a state of liminality, there is instead silence on many key issues. This is despite the fact that a major shift is probably in the offing, from a child and studio-centered instructional focus to one in which instruction focuses on the disciplinary content of art in the areas of art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics, i.e., discipline-based art education (DBAE). While one might find this development to be highly desirable, the manner in which it is occurring may be cause for concern. Singular perspectives are being presented, and a pragmatic concern with how a particular DBAE perspective can be efficiently and expediently implemented seems to predominate (Hamblen, 1987a). It has been suggested that there is a general lessening
of basic research in art education and that this can be attributed to the current focus on the standardization of content and procedures and the emphasis put on finding practical, expedient, and singular solutions (Hamblen, 1987b). Not only current, but also future options, could be affected by this trend toward highly programmatic and prescriptive approaches and away from basic and applied research.

Bowers (1984) refers to key issues that are not included in most school curricula as areas of audible silence. They are audible in the sense that we know that they are not being addressed, and we allow them to remain silent. He also discusses the limited cognitive structure of children who are "socialized to a 'culture of silence' where existence will be defined by external sources they will not understand or be able to challenge" (p.58). We are not like children who are fairly dependent on the information and skills presented to them. If there is a conspiracy of audible silences in art education, it is of our own making. Bowers (1974; 1984) has stressed throughout his work that we both create and are created by our social milieu. Art educators, as a group, create the field of art education and are limited or empowered by their creation. As researchers and instructors, we are in the position of creating elaborated research approaches or of limiting the options for both ourselves and future professionals. If our research and scope of ideas are limited to School Arts fare or the glossy promotional materials of the J. Paul Getty Trust, then it is of our doing.

We create our own liminal states and, in effect, choose whether or not to exercise consciousness. Liminality can apply to an individual's personal experiences, portions of disciplinary investigation, or even the consciousness of an entire culture. I am suggesting that a critical stance toward art education theory, research, and practice could enhance the reality constructing power of individual art educators as well as vitalize the entire field.

References


Footnotes

1 As presented in this paper, research refers to formal and informal investigations using qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Research also encompasses theoretical constructions and models that appear in published materials, are discussed at conferences, and are presented in instructional settings.

2 It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the schism between theory/research and practice and to distinguish between such concepts as basic and applied research. Antipathy on the part of some classroom teachers toward research generated by university professors is also a factor that impacts on the thesis of this paper.

3 Opportunities to participate in the construction of art education reality are also influenced by personal and professional networking affiliations, access to consultancies, publication of research papers, opportunities universities provide for professional development, etc. (Hamblen, 1986). In addition, it needs to be noted that art education is comprised of many areas of taken-for-granted knowledge that may be specific to particular universities, graduate programs, and/or professors (Hamblen, 1987c).

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ART, FOOTBALL AND THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

Pete Helzer and Helen Liggett

Richard Brown, Professor of Art History at Pacific Lutheran University, recently published an article synoptically titled "Regionalism, a Tenacious Myth" (Signature, 1986, 3(6) pp 5-7). Most surprising was that it appeared in Signature, a low budget Northwest arts newspaper out of Seattle, Washington. The appeal of Signature is its plebeian accessibility: descriptive reviews, pragmatic advice on competitions, personality profiles, and an unpretentious gallery guide. For example, it is the perfect place to find the latest word on the Snohomish County Craft Guild. In the differentiation between theory and practice, Signature represented the voice of practice, that is, until Professor Brown's theory piece let down the side. Brown, a theorist, accused the world of art criticism of gamesmanship and thereby shifted his allegiance to the side of the practicing artist. The world of the artist, however, also requires gamesmanship and since Brown insists on carrying the ball it behooves us plebs to politely point out that he is running the wrong way.

Football metaphors have become very familiar to us since Ronald Reagan took over as head coach. They have been employed with gusto to such complex matters as foreign policy, national economy, and the Iran-Contra affair. If the Gipper teaches us one thing it is the political inadvisability of taking serious matters seriously. In the spirit of gamesmanship then we shamelessly present an uninhibited flood of metaphors which attempts nothing less than to resuffle the deck, close the can of worms, and paint the horse a different color, all in the interest of saying something meaningful about the political nature of art criticism.

Metaphors are never tidy so we will limit the discussion of decks, worms, and horses and proceed to our analysis of art. Our point of departure, of course, is the rather serious essay by Richard Brown.

The accusation Brown leveled at the conventions of art criticism seems to be prompted by a heartfelt frustration with the artificial turf, that is, a politically expedient manufacture of a Northwest identity achieved by lumping Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Kenneth Callahan, and Guy Anderson as a Northwest school:

The original attempt to define a Northwest regional style or tradition apparently developed from a sense that this area, being out of the way of mainstream art, needed an identity to give it parity with other parts of the country. Hence, promoters of the Northwest jumped on the works of a few regional artists whose work was superficially related, and tried to make a coherent package of it. The result was the concoction mythos that tries to hold such disparate artists as Newman, Rothko, and Pollock together in that construct known as the New York School, the development of a body of criticism and history that relies on imprecise and arcane terminology to explain this "school," and a continuing attempt to make aesthetic and ideational connections among the artists involved. It provides for great intellectual and criti-
cal gamesmanship. (Brown, p.5)

Here Brown shows promise. The paragraph identifies the game as one involving language. Notions of promoters, packaging and lack of parity imply a thick and active political process. But this is as far as Brown takes it. Not only does he fail to call for an investigation, or at least a meeting of the rules committee, he actually prods us to forget the whole thing. As Brown sees it, a viable alternative to this intellectual and critical gamesmanship is that artists be considered on the basis of their "individual merit." He quotes Greg Kucera in support of a romantic formulation of individualism: "The best artists will speak from their souls... and they will be heard regardless of the prevailing style." (Brown, p.7)

This is where Brown runs over his own blockers and fumbles the ball to the opposition. If regionalism is a "tenacious myth," notions of autonomous artistic genius are even more tenacious. In the face of Brown's baffling political optimism (the assumption of equity in the art world) it would serve us well to call "time out" and talk things over.

Brown's parting words as he left the playing field were, "Forget the critics. Look at the works" (p.7). Granted, such advice has great sentimental appeal. However, it is rooted in some troubling notions of how the game is played. Before our team loses its concentration we should peruse the rule book:

Under Regionalism, here on page seven, it says, for instance, that Snohomish County has an evocative power of .003, whereas Seattle rates .05; Portland, Oregon, .04 and Soho, New York, 9.6. (Forgetting a critic is one thing, getting someone to look at one's work is another matter altogether.)

Here on page four of our rule book we find Goals of the Artist. It says, first: "To Survive" (which we interpret as having a certain economic imperative) and second, "To Be Taken Seriously" (an allusive reference perhaps to art criticism which, not incidentally, increases one's chances of survival).

Under Conduct of Officials we are told that critics are to take Leo Castelli seriously, flirt with post-structuralism, rethink art history and write in prose style wholly inaccessible to the general public. Terms such as "simulacrum," "iterability," and "deconstruction" are to be used whenever possible, but only as adjectives to convey a great sense of depth without the burden of much content.

Under Conduct of Artists we learn that artists are to act aloof, defiant, progressive, innovative, enchanted, and prophetic. With one hand they are to reflect their time, while with the other they are to shape a new consciousness by Star Trekking the cognitive edge of contemporary thought ("to boldly go..."). Between these two creative hands the body is to squirm with discontent. This squirming takes on different levels of difficulty as artists assume or inherit various positions of economic privilege. Squirming on food stamps, is a natural act: squirming on $100,000 a year is a harder trick to turn.

Robert Arneson is an example of an artist who has skillfully mastered the rules, hazards and contradictions of the game. This past year the exhibition "Robert Arneson: A Retrospective" has shown at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., The Portland Art Museum of The Oregon Art Institute, and The Oakland Museum. Articles on Arneson and his work have appeared in numerous publications including Art in America (Kuspit, May 1985), American Craft (Kuspit, Oct/Nov 1986), Ceramic Monthly (Singh, March 1987),
and The Los Angeles Times (Wilson, January 1987). His work is represented in collections the world over, and he has enjoyed the support of The National Endowment for the Arts.

Perhaps the clearest way to give the reader a sense of the game is simply to describe "Naive viewers" (in this case a group of high school students) confronted with the works of Arneson, while two enthusiastic cheer leaders (a docent at the Portland Art Museum and an animated high school art teacher) attempted to convey the artistic import of the works under consideration. The students first viewed Assassination of a Famous Nut Artist. This work, a ceramic bust of Arneson, depicts a gun, balanced over the head, blasting a large hole in the skull. Orange brains spume over the forehead while green matter hangs from the nostrils. An arrow and knife protrude from the neck. As the students gaze at this colorful work they listen to the cheerleaders quote Neal Benezra, Associate Curator of Twentieth Century Painting and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago, praising Arneson as "the most powerful figurative sculptor of the post World War Two period."

The students glance around the room. While they muse over a large drawing of Arneson with the index finger of each hand thrust up his nostrils their teacher trumpets the virtues of "daring to be different." As they view the six or seven pieces portraying excrement, for example, John with Art, a colorfully glazed toilet filled with ceramic feces on loan from the Seattle Art Museum, or Portrait of the Artist as a Clever Old Dog which consists of Arneson's head on a dog's body, a supper dish, and four colorful mounds of feces, they listened to the docent explain how the insensitive public, the uncultured public, doesn't understand Arneson's swim against the tide of convention.

The preceding paragraph illustrates a curious confrontation; that point where the bawds of theory attempt to explicate works of art to an uninitiated public. In this case (which is a report of an actual experience) we see several taken-for-granted ideas employed in an effort to make the art work seem both legitimate and important. Ideas which are most often employed are those which provide criteria for defining "good" art. Critics may demand innovation (new, progressive, experimental forms), excitement (art which is bold, daring, shocking, risky), and prophecy (art which signals us from the "cutting edge" of modern thought). Although we can all think of notable exceptions, art which exemplifies a respect for tradition or a reverence for craft is generally not taken seriously. In the example of the docent, the art teacher and the high school students, the idea also came into play that art is produced by people of "genius," or at least special vision, and the general public lacks the intellectual, emotional or perhaps, culture sophistication to understand and appreciate its expression.

In the hands of a skilled wordsmith we witness remarkable transformations in the meaning and significance of form. Donald Kuspit for instance, writing for American Craft (Oct/Nov 1986), transforms Arneson's sense of self, which in the eyes of our high school tour group appears as a bodacious narcissism, into a tormented misunderstood artistic genius comparable to Leonardo da Vinci! The visual kicking tee from which Kuspit launches this piece of verbal wizardry is a whimsical ceramic plate depicting Arneson's own portly nude body as Leonardo's ideal man. In a 1985 article published in Art in America, Kuspit transforms Arneson's rather blunt enumeration
of the horrors of nuclear war into a "powerful" and "important...surrealistic obliteration of the boundary between the suffering subject and the victimizing world" (p.39).

At this point it may seem that Richard Brown's approach is the most sensible: that is, we should forget the critics and look at the work. But this is impossible. First of all the language concepts employed in the legitimization of art -- concepts such as genius, creativity, individualism, and progress are pervasively taken for granted not only by high school students but by artists and art critics as well. They are so entrenched in American discourse that to call them into question is to blaspheme not only the foundations of art criticism, but The American Way as well: The baby with the bath water, the Constitution with the cornflakes, art as well as football. These language concepts, which become questionable to us only through exposure to alternative ordering systems, as say, through dedicated cross-cultural study or serious historical analysis, support not only a hierarchy of art experts, but an entire educational enterprise as well. We cannot, as the saying goes, step out of one language without stepping into another.

The realization that there is tension, contradiction, and inequity in the language of the art world is not enough to inspire meaningful change. Even a writer as thoughtful and well meaning as Elliot Eisner, a Stanford Professor and favorite son of art education, lends enthusiastic support to a cultural cliche. Speaking at the 1986 American Craft Council's National Conference, Eisner said that the first obligation of a craftsperson is "to get out of comfortable ruts...to create work the public does not like." (Malarcher, 1986). Eisner doesn't elaborate on the implications of this statement for public art education, nor does he demonstrate any understanding of the preposterous interface created when high school students confront a nose-picking Arneson while under the education charge of a system he himself champions.

Perhaps it is time that artists and art educators accept that the language game is inescapable. For better or worse, artists are always located within meaning systems that involve language practices. These provide categorical distinctions, explanations, and justifications of art as well as cultural and historical association. These inescapably locate our identity as artists. Short of requiring Ph.D.'s in cultural anthropology, however, there may be a few subtle ways to rethink our circumstances. Rather than thinking of artistic genius as a natural phenomena it may be more helpful to note that the identity of objects as art flows from special meaning systems which have rules, evaluative notions, and most importantly, perhaps, privileged speakers.

The power of privileged speakers to shape content in the arts operates at the theoretical level as art criticism assumes the posture of evaluative criteria and at the economic level as funds are allocated from such agencies as the National Endowment for the Arts. The process provides forums for particular kinds of art while excluding others. What takes to the playing field is art enumerates the horrors of modern life. It includes art that seeks to re-enchant the world with bundled sticks and feathers, and art that ventures beyond the boundaries of intelligibility. What gets excluded in critical discourse is art which mindfully seeks to affirm something in life worth embracing.

Artists of the Northwest are not impervious to the seductive pull of intellectual fashion. There are
obvious economic incentives for paying attention simply because our public officials get nervous when they look at the rule book. To ensure that they don't inadvertently spend public funds on art the public might like they call in experts from the outside. It makes pragmatic sense for artists to stay in shape, to study the latest plays, and to leap from the bench, hands waving, in hope the visiting coach will send them into the game: "You! Number Six from Myrtle Point! Yes, you, with the bundled sticks and electric features! Go in for Arneson!"

Some of us, however, may ponder deconstruction but still manage letters to our parents. We are the ones who shall remain devoted readers of Signature and continue to take the Snohomish County Craft Guild seriously in spite of its inability to make anyone in SoHo throw the cigar out of her mouth.

References


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Abstract Expressionism and Art Education: Formalism and Self-Expression as Curriculum Ideology

Kerry Freedman

In the 1940's and 1950's, formalism and self-expression theories about abstract expressionism were incorporated into art education. However, as these products of the art community became a part of curriculum, the social and political foundations of the art and the theories were ignored. A school art style was emphasized that contained only selected elements of Greenberg’s formalist analysis of abstract expressionism. Curriculum also contained a reduction of Rosenberg's theory of expressive process to some pseudo-expressive technical characteristics. While the argument is not made that there was a studied and analytical reinterpretation of these critics' theories in school, the theories represented and became part of a general climate of opinion, which helped to shape people's (including teachers') understanding of modern art. The transformation of abstract expressionism in art education was not arbitrary. It supported and legitimated post-World War II institutional priorities of socialization and professional training.

The theories which frame curriculum often approach issues of education from within. For example, artistic development is viewed in terms of physical and psychological traits of children or strategies of teaching which are believed to promote children's growth. A different form of analysis is to examine how internal definitions of school art are influenced by exterior, social relations. An analysis which focuses upon exterior influences includes not only a discernment of causes but a reconstruction of a climate of opinion in order to understand what was possible for curriculum.

The exterior relations that shape curriculum include the priorities of public schooling and the dynamics of the art community. Schooling is shaped by institutional purposes such as the upbringing, socialization and labor training of children. Art involves a different set of social arrangements. By distinguishing between the dynamics of the art community and those of schooling, we may better understand the ways in which school art has been shaped by institutional imperatives.

This paper concerns the cultural and political dynamics of the abstract expressionist art community and the conceptions of the artistic movement represented in education. Although all of the complex processes which have shaped art education during this period cannot be dealt with in a single paper, it will be argued that the formalist and expressive concerns that developed around abstract expressionism influenced, but were transformed in school. The vital social values and intellectual interests which sustain the art community were largely ignored in curriculum. What became possible for curriculum was determined by the social purposes and arrangements of schooling.

The Establishment of Abstract Expressionism

Abstract expressionism is considered America's first avant-garde art movement and the first international style to have originated in the United States.
However, the movement was not concerned merely with a set of stylistic techniques or individual acts of self-expression; the processes and products of abstract expressionism represented a community of discourse concerned with social alienation and political reform.

Abstract expressionism emerged at a time of radical cultural change. During the late 1930's and 1940's, a desire for a culture independent from European tradition emerged within intellectual and artistic circles. A nationalism developed which focused upon cultural leadership and was confirmed by a growing faith in American enterprise. These cross-currents provided a source of debate and inspiration in the art community.

Social Foundations of the Art Community

A number of conditions made the focus upon national culture possible including changes in the international political and economic scene. The development of an influential art community in New York was enhanced by its physical distance from the war. The destruction of World War II made it difficult for the continued development of European artistic traditions, while American cultural activity and study were sustained.

However, the American art community had strong European roots through two groups of artists and intellectuals. One of the groups was made up of first and second generation immigrants who sought assimilation and social mobility through cultural (academic and artistic) knowledge. A second influential group was the refugees. Many of Europe's greatest artists and intellectuals came to the United States to escape the war. Although some of the refugees later returned to Europe, they influenced American cultural discourse through their European understanding of science, the arts and literature. The Europeans brought with them ideas associated with the moral and social commitments of socialism and communism.

Many of those who initiated abstract expressionism were employed by the Federal Art Project. The project gave artists an opportunity to work; but there were cultural agendas as well. It supported social realism as a representation of national culture. The style was thought particularly appropriate because it was considered democratic and easily understood and appreciated by the general public.

Some Federal Art Project artists attended Hans Hofmann's influential Eighth Street school. Hofmann, a German refugee, has a perspective that was both a conceptual and perceptual contrast to European cubism and a vital urban alternative to rural social realism. He emphasized Matisse's imagery and color at a time when most of the art community was influenced by Picasso's analytic abstraction. Hofmann explored the idea that art could emerge completely from within an artist.

By the middle 1940's these various groups came together for social interaction and debate. Artists who had been meeting at the Waldorf Cafeteria merged with the American Abstract Artists to form the Eighth Street Painter's Club. A vital aspect of this coalition was that it was not only artists within their own coterie; the Club promoted a joining of academics and intellectuals with the art community. Lectures and discussions were held concerning political and philosophical issues involving painters, writers, composers and people associated with literary magazines, museums, and universities.

These interactions enabled New York painters to become acquainted with European surrealism. There was
also a growing familiarity with the symbolic abstraction of artists such as Klee, Miro and particularly Kandinsky through reproductions and exhibited examples of their work. The artists adopted the surrealist practice of automatism as an expression of the unconscious. However, unlike the surrealists, the American painters used the graphic representation of chance and unconscious gesture to explore the possibilities of imagery.

Social Visions of the Art Community
From these social relations and artistic experimentation emerged the ideas and images which developed into abstract expressionism. At least three social and political currents coalesced to give direction to the art movement. One was a belief in American democracy as the guardian of individual rights and autonomy, a belief particularly cherished by the refugees and immigrants who had come from countries where these values were denied. Hofmann and others believed that artists represented the independence and creative freedom which democracy promised and which had been sought in their exile from Europe (e.g. Seitz, 1983).

A second current was a concern with modernism and the relation of science to society. Modernism is an intellectual, as well as artistic, movement. In contrast to nineteenth century certitude, modernism involves a consciousness in which conventions and traditions are thought tenuous and existence is considered ambiguous and paradoxical. Modern art focuses upon a self-reflexiveness which draws attention to the medium and process of production. Aesthetic forms have a technical immediacy which contrast with previous pastoral, contemplative and romantic notions of knowledge and culture. Art is thought cognitive and perceptual, rather than symbolic, and is generated through crises of urban technological life. There is a sense of alienation of human beings in general and a marginality of artists in particular.

The view of science also includes a belief in progress based on psychology. It is assumed that a science of the human mind will solve social problems. When abstract expressionism emerged, Freudian and Jungian ideas framed many exploratory responses to modern existence. Artists rejected mechanistic views of man and society and glorified both the idiosyncratic experience and human union through a common mythical unconscious.

A third current in the art community was an American socialist vision which became prominent in the 1930's. During the Depression, many artists and intellectuals identified with socialist reforms and Marxist theory.

In the 1930's, a debate concerning Marxism and modernism received a forum in the literary journals where abstract expressionism was first discussed. There was a problematic quality of the alliance between Marxism and modernism. Some who supported Marxism sought to combat alienation with the pastoral values and worker controlled labor represented in Regionalism which contrasted with abstract art which could not be understood by common people. But Marxism also represented an international social consciousness which challenged the wartime situation in Europe and the isolationism in mainstream intellectual life. By the 1940's an urban disillusionment with Regionalism developed. Although the work of artists such as Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood was supported by urban museums, it provided a sanctified view of American country life which New York artists rejected as isolationist. New York artists sought an urban art which would be more compatible with
There were tensions as artists with these social commitments engaged in their work which may be illustrated by two examples. First, their support for international communism became coupled with a fierce patriotism by the end of World War II. There was a belief that the United States would lead the next cultural revolution. Second, psychology was to replace older forms of manipulation but possibly provided a more compelling form of social control by focusing upon inner thoughts and beliefs.

For a time, New York artists sought to retain a theoretical perspective of Marxism without allowing authoritative constraints of the doctrine to determine the form of their work. However, by the early 1940’s, Soviet aggression (particularly the invasion of Finland in 1939) resulted in a rejection of Marxism. Also influential were the dynamics of the cold war. A growing national fear of communism placed individuals and institutions with communist sympathies at risk.

Part of the American cold war social climate was a pressure on artists and intellectuals to disengage from the political arena. Anti-communist campaigns ended the financial support of many New York artists and federally funded art projects until the 1960’s (Guilbaut, 1983). Previously radical artists and intellectuals began to support more mainstream American values (Barrett, 1982; Guilbaut, 1983).

There was a political shift that appeared to be toward an apolitical stand. Part of the shift was a glorification of the individual which deemphasized the social qualities of life and art.

The popular press publicized the work of abstract expressionism as a symbolic representation of these values. For example, Henry Luce, editor of *Life, Time* and *Fortune*, sought to represent United States corporate industry as a superior model of production and economy. Originally he had supported regionalism as a national culture. However, as it grew evident that regionalism represented progress through worker control and the style became associated with mass culture, Luce stressed individuality through abstract expressionism which he believed illustrated independent thought (Doss, 1987). For example, a 1948 issue of *Life* represented the non-objective work of Jackson Pollack as an imagery without social conflict which would be free of political manipulation (Doss, 1987). However, rather than autonomy, Luce promoted a form of cultural and political consensus while maintaining an illusion of neutrality through an implied reporting of the facts.

To this point, I have presented a brief historical sketch of the social and political climate in which abstract expressionism emerged. Although what has been presented in this and the following section must be limited and may be familiar, it is an important background for final section in which the transformation of abstract expressionism in curriculum will be discussed.

**Social Consciousness and Art Criticism**

One way to understand the development of abstract expressionism, and its representation in curriculum, is to consider the analyses of two critics which became essential parts of the movement. Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg supported abstract expressionism from different perspectives, but both helped to illuminate the artistic style and the intellectual climate of the time. Their perspectives of modern art have continued to influence contemporary taste.
Greenberg was a literary reviewer and editor of the Partisan Review, an influential journal which began in association with the Communist Party, but later became an independent leftist forum concerned with modernism in art. In the 1940's, Greenberg championed the style in the Partisan Review and the Nation. His argument for the style developed from what he conceptualized from Hofmann's lectures on Eighth Street as a historical determinism of art. The determinism was not unrelated to the historical materialism of his Marxist perspective.

For Rosenberg, Marxism was a perspective from which to investigate individual existence and cultural life. The relationship of the individual to society was an issue that Rosenberg focused upon through his life and a cause of the rift with Communist Party loyalists as he gave greater emphasis to the notions of idiosyncrasy and creativity independent of social constraints (Cox, 1982).

The conditions of the war, Stalinist pogroms and the growing nationalism in the United States moved Greenberg and Rosenberg toward relinquishing their Marxist sympathies by the 1940's. Greenberg supported American nationalism, but opposed people such as Michigan's conservative Congressman George Dondero, who believed that modern art was part of a communist conspiracy (Guilbaut, 1983). Greenberg, like Luce, criticized communism but supported the production of abstract art as important to a free and stable society.

In his movement away from Marxism, Greenberg changed his perspective "from purist ideology in politics to pure aesthetics in art" (Kramer, 1962, p.61). His notion of purity assumed that art should maintain an integrity of the properties inherent to a medium. He argued that abstract expressionism had evolved from cubism toward a pure experience of medium that he thought was the essential nature of art.

Greenberg's support of abstract expressionism was based upon a conception of formalism. He considered a purging of subject matter from art (which he thought distracted from pure form) a historical necessity. Greenberg assumed that objective standards of art quality and criticism were revealed over time. His focus upon objective standards of formalism was to free art from the influence of mass culture mediocrity and uniformity (Greenberg, 1940). The particular concern about mass culture was related to a growing fear of banality as a representation of the authoritarian control blamed for Hitler's rise to power and the German people's participation in World War II.

Rosenberg's rejection of Marxism took a different form. He did not absolve artists from social commitment. He recognized that artists could not easily address certain issues during the cold war; however, they were obligated to resist conformity and support expressive freedom. Rosenberg believed that abstract expressionism provided the potential for a pure, human expression in an alienating world. His conception of purification involved an existential process which was to eliminate political ideology from art while maintaining opposition to the moral and aesthetic European traditions of the masterpiece.

In Greenberg's and Rosenberg's criticism, the quality of art was determined by forces internal to the object and the subjectivity of an artist, rather than by external sociological forces. Greenberg took
a historical approach which ironically led to an asocial argument and an interior examination of the production and experiencing of art. While Greenberg argued that there is a dialectic between the history of art and any particular work of art, he omitted considerations of the relation of production to social context. Greenberg assumed, for example, that Rosenberg had arbitrarily connected abstract expressionism with the existentialism that pervaded intellectual thought at the time. He accused Rosenberg of constructing an interaction between the philosophy and the art merely because both were newsworthy (Greenberg, 1962).

Rosenberg, interested in the subjective life of the individual as a representation of human struggle, was ahistorical. He did not attend to the historical construction of social life by various groups, or the multiple subjectivities, which became legacies that make possible and shape contemporary subjectivity. Rosenberg defined the process of painting as the restoration of the metaphysical to art which resolved individual crisis without ideological mediation.

While both critics denied ideological qualities in art and in their criticism, the art community, including Greenberg and Rosenberg, responded to social and political conditions. These critics helped to shape public understanding of abstract expressionism in relation to concerns about alienation and the definition and purposes of culture in industrial society. Paradoxes in their theories about abstract expressionism reflected the social conflict. The emergence of the style became possible in and was part of a milieu which focused upon democratic freedom, but also upon existential isolation; an idiosyncratic production process was valued as well as a common materialism. It was due in part to the political climate, and in part to the denial of ideological qualities in their theories and in abstract expressionism, that Greenberg's formalism and Rosenberg's notion of self-expressionism were easily technicized in curriculum.

The Institutionalization of a Movement: Curriculum and the Avant-Garde

The introduction of abstract expressionism into curriculum was part of a movement in general education which developed in the 1950's and promoted curricula based on professional knowledge of school subjects (Barkan, 1955). The reforms resulted in new requirements for art teachers' studio training and an increased use of art theory to justify school practices. Future art teachers had course requirements similar to those training to be professional artists. Through this education (and the popular press) art teachers became particularly influenced by abstract expressionism (Logan, 1975).

Greenberg's and Rosenberg's explanations of abstract expressionism represented and became part of a general climate of opinion which helped to shape teachers' understanding of modern art. As the art and theories of formalism and expression became part of education, the social and political foundations of abstract expressionism were ignored. The social context that shaped and gave meaning and importance to the ideas, images and processes of the style were lost.

In school, art was transformed into displays of emotion and problems to be solved, eliminating conflict and changing the cultural purposes of the avant-garde. In higher education art was interpreted as a training of "craft plus inspiration" (Rosenberg, 1972, p.47). Similarly, in public school, there
was a belief that a combination of familiarity with media and free self-expression would yield creative art from children (D'Amico, 1953).

A school art style emerged which emphasized certain technical and formal qualities. While Greenberg's formalism had concerned a vitality of medium and the control by form of aesthetic experience, the use of media in education was a process of physical manipulation for young children and the development of skill in using particular media for older students. Rather than the contemplation of artistic traditions, school practice focused upon an arbitrary concern with physical qualities such as paint, drips, and splashes. Knowledge was to emerge through an institutionalized form of play instead of through the historical study of media, form, and function.

Curriculum also contained a reduction of Rosenberg's expressive process to qualities which were assumed to represent the individual expression of "the child". Expression in school was shaped by definitions of what was considered natural and normal in children. While Rosenberg's notion of expression was an idiosyncratic process, school art involved a conception of psychological norms. Expression was reinterpreted from a statement of alienated discomfort to a procedure which provided an illusion of personal well-being.

The transformation of abstract expressionism in art education was not arbitrary. Art education has historically responded to the socialization and labor training functions of public schooling (Freedman, 1987a; Freedman & Popkewitz, in press). In the 1950s, curriculum supported and legitimated post-World War II institutional priorities of socialization and professional training through a focus upon nationalistic priorities. For example, as in the press, abstract expressionist artists were depicted as heroic figures who represented national values and policies of cultural authority. Educators defined the avant-garde as signifying the cultural supremacy of the United States.

Three important socializing mechanisms interacted within art education, and in some ways, legitimated a curriculum already in place. First, individualism was to develop in children a confidence in the correctness and independence of their actions and beliefs. Curriculum maintained that producing art was an act of autonomous expression without social or institutional mediation. Through this lens of individualism, the history of art was a culmination of individual acts of self-expression.

A second mechanism of socialization was the achievement of a certain conception of mental health through art activities. Art was to be therapeutically self-expressive in order to maintain a society without anti-democratic elements which were considered pathological. Art became an aid to develop a democratic, and therefore, healthy, personality in children (Freedman, 1987b).

However, rather than provide the rigorous analysis of a particular person's past experiences which occurred in psychotherapy, the school art style became a subtle form of social control. The style was not personal. Groups of school children were given the same assignments but were to make something expressing the individual and personal. Students are expected to express themselves through a generic freeing of mundane emotion for display in school. A manipulation of medium and certain formal developments were to denote expression and were assumed to represent the psychology of a child. Through the use of technical devices, such as bright colors and painterly brush-
strokes, school art supported the humanistic rhetoric of public education (Efland, 1976).

Interacting with the first two mechanisms was a third: the development of a faith in professional and scientific expertise. As a result of the war, there was a fear of the development of an authoritarian personality in children (e.g. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson & Sanford, 1950). Direction from professional psychologists was to prevent this from occurring (e.g. Lowenfeld, 1947). The strain between a reverence for scientific structure and certitude and fears of dehumanization by science and technology provided support for the therapeutic perspective of school art during this period.

The transformation of the formal and expressive concerns of the art community helped to facilitate school practices. Art was represented as both objective (in relation to professional scientific interpretation and judgment) and subjective (characterized by the inner self of a mythological generic child). The shape of curriculum determined the meanings of the knowledge that supposedly made up its content.

**Conclusion**

The phenomenon of art education can be understood in the context of education. As school subjects are reconstructed for schooling, the communal relations of a field are filtered and redefined by the priorities of schooling. Historical analyses of various aspects of education indicate shifts in beliefs and values as theory and practice reinterpret and recontextualize each other (i.e. Franklin, 1976; Klieberd, 1979; Popkowitz, 1987).

The legacies of abstract expressionism remain important in school but are practiced outside of their historical context. Political and social structures of the period discussed, while still influential, have dramatically changed. The current reform effort to draw art education closer to the art community reflects some of these larger changes.

As we develop a new relationship between adult art and school art, the quality of that relationship must be attended to in a way that has not previously been reflected in art education. Too often, art has been decontextualized in school. It has been reduced in ways that respond to institutional agendas but which are contrary to the cultural importance of art making and understanding. While seeming innocuous or healthful, nationalistic beliefs about individual autonomy, professional expertise and the commodification of art have been focused upon at the expense of other vital issues and have become reified through curriculum. Art education should include a representation of the complex historical and social dynamics which provided the possibilities for art rather than allowing the current shift to merely lead us away from a subtle, but manipulative faith in psychology, toward a more crystallized representation of expertise as the standard for aesthetic judgment. Rather, the continual flux and debate of artistic production should be retained in school.

**References**


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Seeking Cultural Understandir  
Knowing Through the Art of th  
Picturebook as One of Five  
Modalities  

Rogena M. Degge and Kenneth Marantz  

Caught in the maelstrom of scholarly debate about cross-cultural values, we seek some straws for our intellectual salvation. Groups of theoreticians and practitioners, like schools of fish roiling in the seas, create waves. Some groups, like those who supported the exhibition of Primitive and Modern artifacts at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, are historical revisionists seeking new values through the alleged "influences and affinities" they attempt to demonstrate. Others more mundanely offer youngsters cardboard and paint so they may produce their own Kachina dolls in order to come to grips with the fundamental values of an alien culture. Still others wish to alter the function of the art educator by changing his or her role from the tripartite producer/historian/critic to that of ethnographer. And some would use the study of artifacts as a means towards social unification. Nor would we leave out those who continue to speculate about the nature of art and its various categories and hierarchies. In seeking the means to ride these waves we have chosen a modest and possibly different approach to the problem of cross-cultural understanding.

We begin with a group of assumptions:

1) One can never fully understand the "other." One of the joys of life is the mystery inherent in individual differences. Neither marriage nor friendship nor the study of someone else will produce total disclosure.

2) People are fundamentally self-centered. We have fierce survival instincts and gravitate towards experiences which give us pleasure.

3) People are basically curious. We want to figure out a magic trick as well as to speculate about the nature of humankind.

4) People can find ways to satisfy that curiosity, i.e., to learn. We can do so microscopically (introspectively) by examining our own behavior as well as macroscopically by comparing ourselves with others.

We believe, further, that human life is energized through a system of interests. In part these interests cause us to make distinctions among groups of people as well as between individuals. Interests, when examined, are based on values: economic, religious, social, political, aesthetic. Knowledge of interests and values of others provides us some means to understand their culture and to appreciate the differences among us.

Aesthetic interests and values are embodied in the arts of a culture. We focus here on the extent that art objects such as the picturebook, as a reflection of aesthetic values, may lead us to some special cultural understanding: an understanding not possible by means currently in vogue. We begin with the assumption that aesthetic interest fills a large part of daily life. As a matter of course, everyone has aesthetic experiences and makes countless aesthetic decisions. These experiences and decisions are influenced by aesthetic values based in cultural conventions but they are also affected by a full range of other values: political, social, economic, and so
forth. To the degree that we can learn how the arts of a culture embody and reflect aesthetic and other values, we can draw upon them in education to teach for cultural understanding.

There are some who see the notion of aesthetic values as attached to what people "immediately or directly enjoy in simply looking at things in nature or at human-made objects," and that we engage in this looking because we like it, it's pleasant, we find it interesting. 2 But what is that power of the object to stir our aesthetic interest, and what causes the object to have aesthetic value? There are those who claim that some art objects possess more power than others to generate aesthetic interest. 3 In addition, some people are "better fitted to grasp and respond to this power," and thus they are more able to value objects aesthetically than others. 4 Supporting these perceptions, generally, is the notion that the power of the art object to create aesthetic interest lies in its formal, aesthetic merits, e.g., the degree to which the design of the object embodies imagination and is successfully expressive, by Western standards. Further, the extent to which persons are able to recognize these merits in an object will influence their aesthetic interest and response. Unfortunately, this mode of determining how objects may be aesthetically valued offers cultural understanding of the artworld of practice and criticism that disregards, in favor of formalism, a range of other cultural forces that affect the design, interest in, response to, and empathy through art objects. These forces influence what aesthetic value is placed on the objects and why they appear as they do.

To this latter point Clifford Geertz writes:

... it is perhaps only in the modern age in the West that some people (still a minority, and destined, one suspects, to remain such) have managed to convince themselves that technical talk about art, however developed, is sufficient to a complete understanding of it; that the whole secret of aesthetic power is located in the formal relations among sounds, images, volumes, themes and gestures. Everyone else -- and I dare say, among most of us as well -- other sorts of talk, whose terms and conceptions derive from cultural concerns art may serve, or reflect, or challenge, or describe, but does not itself create, collects about it to connect its specific energies to the general dynamic of human behavior. 5 Geertz emphasizes that the value of art is "never wholly intra-aesthetic, and indeed but rarely more than marginally so." 6 He acknowledges the instrumental view which holds that works of art can be seen as "elaborate mechanisms for defining social relationships, sustaining social rules, and strengthening social values." 7 He also recognizes the practice of viewing art as made up of signs that communicate ideas and beliefs of the society in which they are found. In addition, he acknowledges "the sheer phenomenon of aesthetic force" and the universal qualities of art to actualize aesthetic response. But, he argues that our task is to place art (always a local matter) within "other modes of social activity" 8 (our emphasis). When we do this we give art its cultural significance.

To explain, Geertz uses several examples, among them the Yoruba carver whose concern for line stems "from rather more than a detached pleasure in its intrinsic properties." Research by Robert Faris Thompson indicates that the Yoruba...
associate line with civilization. "Civilization" in Yoruba is ilaju: face with lined marks.... The same verb which opens Yoruba marks upon a face, opens roads, and boundaries in the forest...."9 According to Geertz, to study the art of line in that culture "is to explore a sensibility." The Yoruba "materialize a way of experiencing, bring a particular cast out of line out into the world of objects," where we can look at it.10

This understanding would not proceed from a formalist, functionalist, or even instrumental view. To study Yoruba lines for their intrinsic properties, as celebrations of social structures, or as communication to forward useful doctrines or transmit beliefs would be insufficient, if not inappropriate. In this instance, the lines are part of a semiotic system of signs that are "ideationally connected" to that society.11 The usefulness of Geertz's writing is two-fold: it provides a significant argument for semiotic inquiry that is localized within cultural ideation, and it acknowledges a range of systems used to study the meaning or value of art objects.

There are at least four means by which we seek understanding of a culture through its arts: 1) studying the intrinsic aesthetic value of art objects as seen through the eyes of the culture from which they come; 2) learning ways in which art objects define, sustain, or strengthen the society; 3) learning how art objects communicate to others based on signs indigenous to a culture; and 4) considering art objects as embodying a semiotic system that is connected to and a primary facet of the ideology of the society in which they are found.

There is little that is simple straightforward about these four means to understanding. While they each are discrete aspects, their potential lies in their combined or collective application. For example, in Flash of the Spirit, Thompson shows us the complex task of seeking cultural understanding by tracing the influences of Vodun (Voodoo) Religion and Art of Haiti.12 His findings show that, prior to slavery, tribes in several parts of Africa warred and conquered, assimilating others' beliefs and imagery into their own. When these people were brought as slaves from different areas of Africa to Haiti, further assimilation of imagery occurred, both among the slaves and with the Haitians. Also, Roman Catholicism and the attendant art brought to Haiti was a further influence on the signs and symbols of Haitian Vodun art. Thompson's research demonstrates that this art embodies specific and indigenous intrinsic properties, defines cultural beliefs, employs signs that communicate, and reflects a cultural system -- the current aesthetic manifestations rooted in generations of varied and disparate beliefs and practices.

The complex nature of seeking cultural understanding through art is given different consideration by Michael Owen Jones. The author of The Hand Made Object and Its Maker examines the chairmaking of Charley and his friends who live in the Ozark Mountains. Cultural understanding comes in part, he says, from answering questions of "how or why the two-in-one bookcase rocker, masterpiece of furniture was made, of why Charley revised some of his chairs a decade after they were built, of why Hascal wanted to make chairs but could not, or of why Aaron made flat arms on a dining chair."13 Jones believes that such understanding "cannot be attained by setting style periods and supposing that one object's features account for the traits of another object; it does not result from preparing a life history of an inanimate object and tracing the object's presumed
genealogy to a progenitor in some other place in the remote past; and it cannot be attained by assuming that people constitute a homogenous group living in a state of equilibrium and producing objects according to a cultural norm promoting social cohesion." He goes on to say that many models for seeking understanding suffer "from the tendency to reify human thought and expression, to make static that which is dynamic, to assume perpetuity rather than to admit temporality, to render uniform what is individualistic, and to systematize and order in an artificial and simplistic fashion that which is extremely complex, sometimes contradictory, and maybe even chaotic." 14

Our ability to understand how Charley and his friends value these chairs, and why; how these objects define, sustain, strengthen their social system; and how signs embodied in the designs of the chairs communicate to that cultural group is greatly dependent on what we presume about people and recognize about the limits of our research.

Of the four means we have identified thus far to seek cultural understanding, perhaps the most elusive is the fourth. Efforts to learn how art objects embody a semiotic system that is connected to a society's ideology pose unique challenges. Research of semiotic systems found in television imagery and dialogue offers an explicit if narrow range of examples that attest to such challenges. 15 Fiske and Hartley, in their book Reading Television, write that signs embodied in the imagery of television "mean what they do only through agreement between members of our culture." 16 How the message of television is interpreted, then, would depend on the extent of this agreement. Some signs and symbols are found to have meaning cross-culturally, while others are not.

Learning patterns of association vary, and, as an outcome, signs that may come, for instance, in the form of television "zoom" or of color, and so forth, would have similar meaning across some cultural groups, but not others. 17 Cultural inquiry of the aesthetic imagery of television, as well as the other arts of a society, would include questions like those from Arthur Asa Berger: "What are the important signifiers and what do they signify?" 18

The complexity of the inquiry is evident. Fiske and Hartley reflect the concerns of Jones in reminding us: "We are dealing with dynamic aesthetic codes which are shaped primarily by convention or unstated agreement among users." Further, these "signs" can belong to more than one aesthetic code and so codes can overlap and interrelate in a network of signification. 19 Seeking the relation of these and other signs and codes to the ideology of the society holds a tremendous challenge, when we realize, too, that within any society there will likely be several cultural groups.

The applications of and response to these signs and codes may vary significantly depending on the aesthetic values or "tastes" of a group, further our efforts to connect art objects to social ideologies.

Seeking cultural understanding through art is clearly a complex venture. In this paper we have thus far addressed four means to such understanding. These offer a foundation for a range of didactic instruction in the art classroom. Yet, simplistic, even well intentioned attempts at such instruction may do more to damage than advance cultural understanding. Ralph Smith helps us find a rational basis as he differentiates among ways of approaching the artifacts of other cultures. He uses a model Walter Kaufman created when he analyzes
texts. Boldly outlined, he characterizes four fundamentally different ways of knowing:

1) The Exegetical: coming to another culture believing in advance that it has superior qualities compared to one's own.

2) The Dogmatic: the opposite, i.e. looking at the other group convinced that yours is superior.

3) The Agnostic: being as value-neutral as possible and, as a result, having no significant basis for reflection, or for making useful assessments.

4) The Dialectical: approaching the values of another culture "with a view to discovering what significance they might have for self-definition." Clearly the first two schemes serve purposes other than cultural understanding. And the third, the agnostic, although less blatantly offensive, lacks the structure and passion necessary for dealing significantly with the complexities of social groupings. The dialectical appeals to us because it recognizes the self-seeking nature of us all, an almost instinctive curiosity about the world. It also respects the evolving quality of the search as it moves from objects to the conditions of its genesis and its function within the various groups that constitute the culture as Geertz suggests.

We believe that the dialectical approach to the aesthetic experience of others can be and should be fostered in the young, not only because it is a humane basis for didactic instruction but because it can help to develop the imagination. Aesthetic experience is a form of psychic transport, a means to transcend mundane existence. In seeking a vehicle for youngsters that might carry them into alien cultures we quickly discarded the kind of isolated object that museums typically house in glass-covered cases. Such vehicles move us at best to understand about the other culture. But there is another means of knowing, more mystical or poetic and less direct but a way that leads to knowing empathetically.

Thus, we offer a fifth means, empathy, to seeking cultural understanding through art. The picturebook is our example of this means. This publishing genre dominates the life of the child in its formative years and will, if thoughtfully conceived, continue to entice the youngster into adolescence and beyond, because we believe, as C.S. Lewis believes, that a children's story is probably the best art form for expressing an idea. It conveys both the conviction of wisdom and the conjuring of wonder.

Sendak 22, for example, can stimulate the flow of the imagination's gastric juices in the tale of a youngster's adventures with some Wild Things by creating a believable fantasy world and sailing Max into a dreamy sea. And Hyman can chill us with her depiction of the psychological decay of Snow White's stepmother through pictures alone 23, while Mayer's uses of pre-Raphaelite romanticism draws is into Beauty's entanglements with the Beast.24 If such artists can interpret fictional narratives in a way that makes us empathize with the characters in a particular make-believe setting, why can't the same artistic skills be used to give us a sense of some active but unknown other culture?

These art objects most often combine a narrative text with a sequence of narrative images utilizing all the techniques and principles of art that other art objects exploit. The words provide one kind of meaning, in a process in which we seek correspondence with certain life experiences. The pictures present more concrete symbols, supplementing and extending the overall meaning of the combined
narratives. The reader therefore can experience in a qualitative (aesthetic) way but with much greater understanding when only a single picture or statue, or worse, a picture of a statue, is made the object of inquiry. Using such devices as environmental settings, costumes, or graphic styles the creators of such books present the reader/looker with two kinds of information about some other place and/or time in a way that involves both mind and heart in an integrated experience à la John Dewey.

Clearly we're not proposing that reading (experiencing) a bunch of books will give the child an instant grasp of some unknown culture. Nothing will, not even if some "fact" books might suggest otherwise. Because we believe that becoming involved with others helps us better come to know ourselves, our culture, our arts, we are convinced of the opportunity picturebooks offer art educators. Not all picturebooks by any means: many volumes purporting to have cultural content may take the reader down the road of ethnic stereotype.

Having exposed our convictions we must also exhibit our reservations because we are not trying to sell you a panacea. A book like Mayer's Everyone Knows What A Dragon Looks Like is indeed a Westernized pastiche of Oriental painting, and it may be accused of presenting a false idea if that art. Nevertheless it does capture many of the conventions of landscape and forms of costume and presents them in a manner that allows Western children to enter a foreign world.25 Lubin's illustration for The Perfect Peach affects another Eastern style, one more directly influenced by the Japanese woodcuts of the 17th and 18th centuries.26

A native Japanese artist, Maruki, has created a picturebook wrenched from her memories of the Hiroshima tragedy that more authentically visualizes the personal horror of that day.27 Traditional watercolor techniques have been modified, yet they carry with them the cultural lineage which makes the reader empathize with the artist's experience in a way not possible had the story unfolded in Mayer's or Lubin's fashion. She takes us from the peaceful family mealtime setting through the sudden explosive disintegration, the river red and body-choked and the vast grey devastation of the landscape. The final image, however, is a hopeful one as the people are shown, using the same reds of the bomb blast, making lanterns to commemorate the event.

By contrast, an Englishman, Briggs, reacts to the atomic timetable in a Western tradition.28 More wordy, more cerebral, it depends for its impact on some knowledge of current circumstances derived from World War II. It uses color to show the change from the red heat of the blast of World War III to the final blackness of the inevitable deaths of the couple. As we respond to the pathos of the narrative, we also sense the cultural environment that has generated it.

Brown's Shadow tells a story of magic from sub-Saharan Africa in a way that respects the culture in its treatment of figure and landscape and evokes the spiritual forces that are significant to it through interpretations of dance and related artifacts.29 By contrast, Haley captures another quality of that area: the humorous and more colorful approach to the folktales that so richly convey the wisdom of the group in more exaggerated images based on traditional architecture and costume.30

In the Jafita series we are shown the boy in mundane scenes with his mother and father.31 The depiction of everyday routine, filtered through the artist's sensibilities, offers us the chance to sympathize with the current situation of blacks.
in South Africa.

Children see the world from a different perspective than adults; they respond to experiences and absorb its sights and sounds. Their selections, their tastes if you will, are a function of these experiences. But we can account for their tastes, even more for their aesthetic growth, by helping them come to see themselves through the artistic products of others, whether as objects to learn about or as aesthetic narratives to become more empathetically involved with.

We have chosen to demonstrate the potential for such empathetic knowing through ten picturebooks. Clearly, however, we are not discounting the other modes of knowing. Perhaps it takes a Geertz to inform us what we intuit, that there's more to an artifact than its artistic qualities and that, in one way or another, we should seek out its significance within the culture of its generation and/or use. Depending upon our sensibilities and willingness to investigate more than the isolated objects of a place and time, there are a range of systems to be exploited for generating meaning or value. These systems, in summary, may be phrased as questions:

1) How do people of the culture value the artifacts?
2) In what ways do these objects support or strengthen the fundamental social needs or objectives?
3) How do the conventions of design and symbol act as a means of inter-cultural communication?
4) Why do certain artifacts form a semiotic system that exemplify the basic ideology of a society?

Answering these questions generally demands a frontal attack, a flurry of objective data-gathering and analysis in the manner of sociologists and anthropologists (ethnographers perhaps). Cleverness and diligence will provide considerable knowledge about another culture.

But even allegedly homogenous groups have divergent sub-groups ("value systems" to use Gans' term).32 And, to compound the problems of value systems within cultures, we recognize more each day the internationality of such systems. In other words, to seek significant cultural understanding, let alone such understanding through the arts, may be a futile, even fraudulent gesture. Yet, as art educators we bear the responsibility to help others enhance their natural curiosity and make more profound their quest for self-identity. And in calling your attention to a means, the dialectical (as yet untested) fifth modality for helping to fulfill that responsibility, we are not cynical. Engaging a picturebook is a real experience, not a vicarious event. The qualities inherent in that experience (gained through a transcendence from here to that other place) can make us more appreciative of the values of some others, can help us understand them a bit more. The knowledgeable and skillful artist ingests and interprets the qualities and creates a visual narrative of wisdom and wonder. The picturebook, as a form of children's literature, "is our link to the past and a path to the future. And in it we find ourselves."33

Footnotes

1 For this perspective and related concepts, see M. Rader and B. Jessup. Art & Human Values. (Prentice Hall, 1976), Ch. 1.

2 Ibid., p.7.
cf. H. Broudy, R. Smith, among others.
Ibid., p.97.
Ibid., p.97.
Ibid., p.97.
Ibid., p.98.
Ibid., p.99.
Ibid., p.99.
Ibid., p.99.
Ibid., p.99.
Ibid., p.99.
Ibid., p.213.
J. Fiske and J. Hartley, Reading Television, p.64.


29 M. Brown, Shadow (from the French of Blaise Cendrars). (New York: Scribner's, 1982).


33 J. Cott, Pipers at the Gates of Dawn, xxii.

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The Interpretation of Modern Art -  
What is Possible When Dealing with the Explication of Art

Heinrich Kupffer

translated by Jan Jagodzinski

The attempt to interpret modern art comes from different approaches and moves along several lines of thought. Generally speaking, together these approaches leave no doubt that a linguistic explanation is possible and legitimate. This assumption, which forms a bridge between work and picture, is a decisive, often uncontested problem of aesthetic logic. Spectators should watch out for the traps and fallacies. They may expect that the clear statement a work of art unambiguously makes for them, the unseemingly apparent interpretation of the work, leads back to a lack of understanding of the "real" thoughts and precise statement of the artistic "message." This expectation by the spectator is deceptive. It makes a fertile discussion of the interpretation of a work of art more difficult rather than easier. The thesis of this article claims that through the work of art, modern art does not make reality readily available but is a component part of a wandering culture. The form of our spoken communication is always, at first, produced anew. Although the socially conditioned structure of art allows itself to be explicated, the statement of each artwork does not.

Let us take an example of a current interpretation of The State Hospital, by Edward Keinholtz. We find the following explanation: "Dismayed by sadistic care, indifferent doctors and typically inhuman attention to patients, Keinholtz has represented this hospital as an angry indictment against all such places." Another author interprets Francis Bacon's, Seated Figure, with the phrase "into a three-dimensional scene, a being abandoned, a being thrown-into-the-world of anonymous people." Finally, concerning Max Beckmann's, The Dream, one commentator begins, "The way to the picture is not easy. There already for us his [Beckmann's] displeasure with the world of meaning, which, through his impoliteness and nasty remarks, and moreover through his eccentricity and mysterious absurdity appear to make Beckmann accessible. What do these five forms [in the picture there appear five people], who are found together in a bleak attic in a carnival-dream of misery want?"

Such attempts at interpretation appear to be three-fold. First, they come from life experience, which allows them to be expressed in everyday speech. This is the source of their origin. That is how one deals with an artwork. Nothing more need to be brought to the expression. Since the artistic dimension drops out through the coarse sieve of interpretation, the way to the artwork is able to be shortened. It appears as if the listener was aroused by a spiritual musical score. It makes no difference whether one deals with a Beethoven Symphony, a military march or a popular song. Secondly, these interpretations keep to "representational" art because they are taken as visual illusions of what is seen on the picture's surface, referring to the material part of the empiri-
that the artwork penetrates from the outside as if it were an unidentified flying object; the astonished population must be put at ease in order to take away their anxiety.9

In the first way there is a problem concerning interpretation. The attempts to interpret modern art will be discussed under three points of view - not that this helps to critically resolve the basic model of existence. After the first viewpoint is examined, the second will question which form of explication can still be meaningful when dealing with modern art.

Why are Interpretations Doubtful?

The hermeneutic paradigm that seemed to allow us to look over the artist's shoulder is, today, being placed into doubt by several critics.10 There are at least three good reasons for this. First, what did not take place in the 18th century was the domination of the idealistic basis for art.11 At that time it seemed that despite different possible accentuations, art began to be assigned verbally its "purpose" and formulated theoretically as to what it "ought" to do. The contemporary theoreticians thought what lay behind and beyond the work of art was as an absolute well-spring of meaning out of which art conceived its cultural and human functions: perhaps an exaggerated idea as to what the artistic expression must bestow. To dwell on this point, one finds up to the present, right within Marxist theories of art, for instance Hans Eisler, that "art will be for the first time the grand master teacher of society."12

Secondly, we must mistrust attempts at interpretation when they actually do not procure a higher meaning but are determined as being equivalent to other forms of expression. In the discussions over meaningful paradigms of interpretation, entire types of interpreta-
tion, such as art documented as "denial," "decay," "progress," "healing," are today being dismissed as inadequate. This is true also of new formulations that are opposed to them which are not so different in principle, for example when art is declared as "protest," as "regression," as "educational product," or psychoanalyzed as "repressed" feeling. In this exchange of schematic descriptions, words against words are exchanged, but it remains unclear how word and artwork generally belong together. One argues as if the question of what art actually offers, doesn't exist.

Thirdly, resonating with the excessive endeavor of hermeneutics, the explication of artworks makes them lack independence; art becomes governable and available as though, without the word, art could not exist. The word in this case is complementarily inserted: what matters is that word and picture are revealed together. The word, in this process, is to the artwork as the vacation photo is to the experienced vacation. Both testify to the frantic endeavor to take hold of reality through the inclusion of other media and make it publicly communicable. Such intentions become effective magical thinking; they seize hold of a phenomenon through the word. The word takes in a function of power through naming. It puts the phenomenon in its place.

If the critics' attempts at explication appear to be doubtful we should perhaps consider what the artists themselves are saying. At first glance it seems as if an artists' commentary would offer an unmistakable authentic report about their work or about art in general on which we can rely. However, in such cases we should pay particular attention. The statement artists make about their art is comparable with those pedagogues say about education. One possibly accepts those which are masterfully worked out on the spot, theoretically beyond the cliches (Hermann Lietz); another artist likes to advance profound theoretical insights the other way around, to identify himself not as a creative practitioner but only as a thinker (Gustav Wynek). Here, of course, there are also exceptions. One is able to expect that the explication of the educational predecessor is consistent with the limited change of relationships (Janusz Korczak, Anton S. Mararenko). These are in accordance with Naum Gabo's theory which explains how artistic forms provide space to be thoroughly optically comprehensible by recipients. This doesn't change anything as to how the word and the artwork operate on different levels. These named explanations also are not self-explicative. They are testimonies of creative moments of inspiration in the medium of words which possess their own peculiar reality.

The question as to what the artist says about his/her art has become the difference between an old generation and a young generation. The old generation still wanted total action; they wanted to change an entire culture. The explications of art, in all the numerous manifestos of the 20th century, were well-grounded in theory. The younger generation distances itself from such programmatic confessions. Their consciousness has been changed by their social possibilities. They appear no longer as potential revolutionaries but as suppliers to a cultural market. Factually, the comprehensive goal of the older generation has disappeared, but for that reason the media of production and the level of expression present a richness of forms. They are no longer able to be neatly and tidily defined compared with graphic application or happenings, or compared with advertising or technical doodling. When art as a market-
supply occurs, there is nothing more to explicate; there is no public interest as to what an artist has in mind. Free, the artist maintains a hold on the market (by this is meant not only whether the artist sells pictures). This new art is multitudinous, it hardly appears possible to overlook the great variety. It does not allow itself to be compre-
hended under a central point of references by the artist or by the critic.

When art begins to appear as a "cultural" offering for the market, it is considered to be a quasi-plastic phenomena such as advertising, design, and optical media. Since in former centuries art also had a function as illustration in place of reading for an illiterate public, one is able to assume with the growing literacy, that the meaning of art and symbols must have declined. At present that is not the case. Especially in a society with education for the masses, a richness of picture signs and attractions presenting themselves so that art becomes as effective as everyday speech. As well, out of this visual kaleidoscope are cut out optical signals of all sorts for mass consumption as a larger part of the spoken word. Here, submitted to consciousness is an aesthetic foreground which is a narrow inter-
relation between word and picture. Let us take a common example: comics with "balloon-speech." On such a plane where word and picture are restricted to a figurative superficial communication, there is a correspondence between picture and ballooned speech. Word and picture become synonymous with one another, just as aptly expressed in the title of the German newspaper Bild-Zeit-
tung.20 When we are not excessively discursive and abstract in our speaking and thinking, as in ready-
made thought-balloons word and picture supplement each other. What we have to say then, still only has a character of packaged pieces that fit into the standards of the respective situation. Thinking, speaking, and experiencing become functions which merely refer to "aesthetic" pre-determined frames of communication. This is the way problems of the explication of art are processed because society doesn't "need" art at all.

Up to now art, despite its orientation to and share of the market as an independent cultural achievement, and despite its distancing itself by being critical of the everyday world, has kept its public pseudo-aesthetic affinity and indicated clearly the deep rift between word and picture. The more we remove ourselves from the level of smooth controvertibility, all the more evident it becomes that art and word are independent media. Particularly when they are understood differently from one another it could help contribute to the emancipation with which we construct our understanding of culture and also a language that could be stimulated towards precision.

Levels of Possible Explication

After all of this, the question still remains as to what we can grasp about artworks that are generally correlated with words. An understanding between artist and spectator, as well as recipients, is without a doubt necessary. We ought not to be content with the saying: if you can't feel it, you can't grasp it! Also we must not be easily puzzled, brooding, or help-
less with artworks that leave us standing, silent by the sheer subjective experience. The fenced off omnipotence of interpretation should not be exchanged for the helplessness of becoming speechless recipients. To what extent an explication is possible when dealing with modern art shall be examined in the following three levels.
Suppositions Concerning Conversation Over Art

First of all, the suppositions of my discussions about art must be clarified through several critical questions. To whom do I address myself [when I speak about art]? I am able to converse with a partner over art when we pay attention to each other in respect to particular forms, perspectives, color effects and so on. That is only possible if our cultural level and our art interests are to some extent homogeneous. Like talk about chess, an example taken up by Ludwig Wittgenstein, which is taken for granted, the speech partner readily knows what to play next; therefore, knowing about art in advance contextualizes the talk about art. For that to exist there must clearly be a conscious agreement as to how we comprehend art and handle it. I am not able to bring home with words what we mean by art to someone from another culture who has no perception of art which is like mine. When we mutually reflect how new forms of art change our cultural understanding, our intellectual and aesthetic customs, conversation between like partners must not remain just receptive and understandable but can be innovative.

What do we mean by this? We are able to bring about and establish, through the medium of conversation in which art operates, a logical base from which the artist began. Here there are a rich number of basic patterns: subjects (Carl Hofer's masks), surprising combinations (Rene Magritte's picture puzzles), rhythms of forms and paint (Piet Mondrain's constructive grids). The logic of modern art is not unified but diverse.

With what purpose do I speak? I am able to articulate my own premise and expectations from which I began my dealings with art, just as the claims of society seize hold of art and integrate it. I am able to critically shed light on those interests I am always striving for art to clarify, to make known, to control.

While such an interpretation makes conscious a hidden thirst for power, it attains higher levels of abstraction and becomes a meta-interpretation.

Art as a Specific Level of Reality

If the conversation about art becomes established on a wider basis through the clarification of linguistic conditions then the attempt to conceive pictures as single-pieces (Einzelstucke) leads into a blind alley. What art in a contemporary world achieves by this is already a known assumption; it is only necessary to find out what an artist had thought about this or that picture. To interpret a single picture is similar to giving a piece of advice to a child whom I don't know. By this all the key issues are already taken-for-granted: how we wish to treat children in our society; what matters in our general education; which forms of co-existence between children and adults we can standardize and live with. It is precisely these unarticulated premises that are of real interest.

Art appears to be a basic form for the experience of reality. As a spectator, I must try to comprehend the form and its modus operandi. To make my experience meaningful I debate with and through the artwork's reconstructed dimension of reality. When I view the artwork this way, I am able to verbally ask myself and answer the question: which paradigm of reality do I preoccupy myself with? How do I approach the world? I do not know and do not need to know what the artist wanted to express with a single image. Rather, I am able to clarify for myself what sort of
communication becomes effective here.

What is important is that I accept this art as a legitimate possibility in our culture, that I view artworks as belonging to our culture and that I see in their forms those possibilities of expression that state the rules for us today. If I understand a single image, then the method itself is apparently clear and need only be applied to an individual case. In the case of modern art, the problem lies as to what criteria exemplified the very first understanding.22 Art has its own dimension, a specific level of reality. I am able to deal with a single picture only when I have comprehended the general dimensions of art.

**Decoded Reality**

Naive notions of interpretation emerge from the following assumption: our world is clear for we are able to experience and see it with a naked eye; only an artwork is unclear. It conceals its meaning and poses a puzzle that we must decode. This misconstrued perspective leads us to a dead end. We are able to avoid it if we accept an artwork as it is, however our outlook has changed.23 It comes to light that it is not the artwork that is difficult to understand but the world we live in. My most difficult stretch of the journey begins with the first episode upon the reception of the work of art. The artwork challenges me to a complex mental activity. It starts a process in operation because it has no demonstrative but an appellative character. The "text" which is to be written by me does not translate the picture into the work but is my own productive performance directed at society poetically expressed in Rainer M. Rilke's famous phrase: "You must change your life!"24

The artwork is not simply deciphered as a text we know in principle. Rather we could say, reality is a cryptograph full of puzzles that can be deciphered with the help of art. This permits us to see the exemplary paintings by Rene Magritte. By not matching the subject to the caption of the artwork, Magritte's artworks are absurd, e.g., La Clef des Songes. Are they any more absurd than what really happens, for example the family of a concentration camp's commandant under the Christmas tree? Magritte's rhinoceros climbing up a column, Le Montagnard, is absurd. Is it as absurd as the growing mountains of butter that lay wasting while hourly thousands are starving? Here, it becomes clear that this isn't an art that is taken into the intimate realm of the home (Gefilde), but demands a lively debate with the social reality through art.25

The current dealings with art belong to the absurdities in society. Walter Benjamin's apt recognition: "The desire to bring things closer together-spatially and humanly - is as impassioned as the wish by the current masses as to what their intention is in overcoming every unique condition through the reception of their reproduction."26 The "technical reproducibility" is only a material condition by which society is made through artworks' chronic articulation (the documented interpretation of human existence), domestica­tion (the eventual acceptance of this documentation) and binding of mass produced goods (such documentation becoming part of the larger historical myth). Successful against blockages (from becoming inert), society's own absurdity is allowed to become apparent through art.

**Taking Stock:**

**Art as a Constructive Component of Our Way of Life**
In conclusion, we risk an answer to the question, "What is possible when discussing modern art?" by recalling Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "way of life" (Lebensform). Art is a part of our way of life in the following three essential ways.

**Cultural Logic**

Not for everyone, but certainly for those who occupy themselves with art, art belongs to the mental infrastructure, to the conditions of their experience of the world. If there are artists who directly visualize the world in this manner, then located on the horizon is what today can be thought of and visualized. The artwork reflects not only reality, which is how Marxists used to think, but is, itself part of reality, that also shapes the world. There is not only a spoken logic but also a social and cultural logic, a variety of levels of speech and thought as well as the cultural understanding. That makes the dilemma clear for the articulated explications of art. To those who know what art is I need not explain it. I am not able to explain it to someone who does not know what art is. A seemingly comprehensive talk about art meant for the general public (for instance guidance at an exhibition), can perpetuate misunderstandings to a public who does not understand art.

**Art Creates Reality**

Like science, art starts out from a "paradigm." Scientific paradigms are the basis for thinking and research, world views and experience. It is not only that a science approaches close to the pre-determined reality according to its paradigm, but through such an act, the paradigm itself becomes a component of reality. Paul Feyerabend had pointed out that with the Copernican revolution not only did the view of the movement of the celestial bodies change, but the whole structure of thought changed too. Similarly, it is with modern art. By living with this art I live in a reality which is just that way and is not structured any differently. Art does not point singularly out a particular sector of reality which it then left unexamined. Usually, rather it brings forth a reality about which it provides information for the very first time. This new paradigm comes into being when a group, who sets the tone in a society, admits to a new reality; hence the paradigm defines a culture in a respective historical phase.

**Contact with Art as a Requirement of Thinking and Speaking**

If art is part of our way of life, then the condition of our thinking and speaking belongs to it [art]. Consequently, we cannot affirm ourselves only through the work of art. On the one hand, the frame of our spoken explications through society and culture is marked out. On the other hand, this culture and society is the field from which we orientate ourselves by means of speech; it arises from those structures we are able to make conscious through critical discussion. If modern artworks seem inaccessible, then we must search for a suitable society they describe and soon we should find out that it is our own. They reveal in their sense, not through clarity, but through those understandings which have truly expired in society.

The object of our interpretations is not our art but our way of life. Here the dealings with art, the animate, discursive, articulated actions, are in their rightful place.
Commentary: The Postmodern Dilemma: The Relationship Between Word and Image

Jan Jagodzinski

The questions Professor Kupffer's article raise concerning the relationship between image and the word, have been, by and large, ignored in modern aesthetic thought. An artificial separation of these two media of expression had been, since the Renaissance, characteristic of western philosophical thought. Leonardo, Cellini and Michaelangelo all wrote treatises in order to place art on the same footing as the literati's words. A quick scan of the philosophical record suggests that the deep schism persists between the image and the word which manifests itself as a bifurcation between rationality and irrationality. To name but a few of the more prominent proponents of this position; Schiller's distinction between sensuousness and the rational (the word being rational, art being sensual), Nietzsche's distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, Freud's pleasure principle and reality principle, Caudwell's genotype and nature, Jung's archetype and society, Fromm's collective art and marketing orientation, Marcuse's eros and civilization, and Sorokin's characterization of sensate and ideational cultural types. We might end the list with an often quoted philosopher of art, Susan Langer, who preserves a strict definition, rests on the binary oppositions that have emerged throughout western thought.

As art educators who are living in a postmodern world, we should give pause in the face of Professor Kupffer's thesis as to the possible limits of interpretation. It is quite clear from his exposition that art does not reflect reality, rather it partakes in its construction. As art educators, we are involved in the creation of Bildung, a term which refers to an individual's possession of a rich cultural understanding as developed through the "story" which we as teachers expose to our students. What sort of art we choose to expose our students to, what values we articulate during its interpretation, and what definitions of art we promote, socially constructs who we are. It is the "story" we weave in our classrooms. It is obvious that such a task is highly political, can be ideologically lucid, and can shed light on the hidden interests each one of us possess.

In our postmodern period the name of Nietzsche begins to loom large. In the German context such internationally known philosophers as Peter Sloterdik and Peter Burger have brought home Nietzsche's famous insight: the only truth is there is no truth. Professor Kupffer's position echoes this distinct postmodern dilemma. If there is no truth as socially constructed, we must face the awesome responsibility that any idealistic absolutes must be abandoned and replaced with the more sobering realization that both language and image, together, help shape our reality. Reality becomes a contested battleground amongst dominant power groups. One does not need to dig very deeply to realize that gender, color, race, age and physical ability are but a few of the deciding factors which differentiate our students from one another into stratified layers of achievement and excellence. To this Professor Kupffer's queries raise the important question of democracy.
As art educators, what is our social responsibility when promoting an image of the world, especially today when we are living in the shadow of the nuclear bomb?

Lastly, the issue between word and image is central to the postmodern debate. Modern art had its roots in 'humanism.' As art educators, we all have been told the 'story' that the individual - the great artist of Western tradition, who has developed a unique style should be promoted in our school programs. Indeed this is the position advocated by NAEEA's insistence on excellence as recently articulated by Ralph Smith.32 This character type manifests itself through such key concepts as creativity, originality, and self-expression. This individual presupposed by humanism is an autonomous being, possessed of self-knowledge and an irreducible core of humanity, a human essence which strives over history progressively to perfect and realize itself. Perhaps best articulated through a Hegelian aesthetic we have come to know this story as "progress" in art, with the artist in full search if the truth and authenticity. Recent postmodern criticism has tried to bury this story - to deconstruct its central core of beliefs. Most notably, such theoreticians as Derrida, Boudrillard and the late Foucault, have presented an anti-humanism that is extremely sobering when compared to the elation and the promises of modernism, such as progress, reason, objectivity.33, 34, 35 Derrida coined the term "logocentrism" as the tendency of western metaphysics to refer to all questions of the meaning of "representations" - novels, films, photographs, paintings and so on - to a singular founding presence which is imaged as being behind them, whether it be the author, reality, history, zeitgeist, or structure. This metaphysics of presence founded on the privileging of speech over writing and, I would argue, word over image, claims that the words I speak are authentic and that, through dialogue, any possible misunderstandings or doubts as to my intentions may be cleared up. Once committed to writing, my words become subject to the interpretation of the reader who cannot gain the certainty of my intention and hence misinterpretations are liable to occur. The same reasoning applies to art. The artist's words become most influential when the art's true meaning is to be ascertained. Derrida's notion of logocentrism puts into question a privileged origin and the view of 'humanism' that wo/man is in full spontaneous possession of self expression, because the illusion of language is precisely in that a meaning that is present, preconstructed in full integrity, behind a unit of language or any other representational form is not possible. In whatever form, as Professor Kupffer's thesis touched upon, meaning is only produced within a complex play of differential relationships, in what Derrida refers to as difference. The final course of meaning upon a point of original certainty is endlessly deferred. This again puts doubt on a critic's or a teacher's secure explanation and evaluation of an artwork. For art educators this means that we, as beholders and interpreters of art in dialogue with our students, must face the uncomfortable and precarious position of being the producers of meaning rather than being consumers of it. We learn more or as much about ourselves than about the art we interpret. How are we to avoid being experts when it comes to art appreciation?

All this leads me to a final brief remark on the recognition that conceptual art has been, and in some circles continues to be, an artform that breaks down the barriers between word and image. This is
particularl y true of information art such as documentation. As art educators working within the postmodern period, we must turn towards the media of mass arts where the distinction between word and image was broken down a long time ago, rather than continue to privilege such representational humanistic studio orientations as easel painting and sculpture. The whole realm of semiotic theory awaits us. Professor Kupffer's discussion makes us more aware of the naive divisions which have up-held humanism, culminating in the most recent slogan promoting the major differences between left and right brain and ignoring the central issue—what sort of society are we promulgating through the representational imaginings of both word and image? From such a question it becomes readily apparent that art education is far-removed from critical political questions assuring its dormancy through the reliance on expert art critics, museum educators and the humanist line of great male artists who continue to bring forth the 'good news' (the truth) as registered in the Bible of Art History.

Footnotes

1. Originally published as "Interpretation moderner Bildwerke—was lässt sich Umgang mit Kunst Oberhaupt verbalisieren?" Universitas, #433 (Januar 1987). pp.65-73. The translator would like to thank Sybille Anseim for her help with the more difficult passages in the text and her willingness and patience to examine the final translation.

2. Prof. Dr. Heinrich Kupffer was professor of education from 1971-1986 at the PH in Kiel. His areas of specialization are fundamental questions concerning education and aesthetics, philosophy of science and educational sociology. Since 1986 he has been retired and lives as an author in Berlin.

3. The location of the "real" message forms the substance of Kupffer's analysis.

4. Wandeln de Kulture has been translated as 'wandering culture.' The verb wandeln refers to the act of strolling in the woods, a common Germanic pastime. Heidegger had popularized the term Holtzweg, or path through the woods, as a way to characterize existence as being both lost and found; we are conscious of the path we have taken through the woods (lived life), yet each step we take further into an abyss, an uncharted jungle since we do not know what lies ahead. Each step, taken in the present towards some clearing we hope to find ahead, has already been influenced by our previous walks. Kupffer is alluding to the view that all history is characterized by such a paradox. The future is never pre-determined, a path already paved, rather it unfolds as we look in the past and reinterpret it from our current historical moment. Current art movements likewise must be interpreted against the broader historical discourse on art if they are to take on meaning. Examining each tree makes us blind to the forest; examining the entire forest makes us blind to the individuality of each tree. Such hermeneutic process can best be described as "wandering" since its course is always open to twists and turns depending upon the politics of the interpretations. The praxis of history becomes doubled; it consists of both the current artistic practice and the interpretation of that practice. Such action may change the
direction of the projected path. Today, feminist praxis, for example, has introduced new twists and turns as the critique of patriarchy forces is to re-evaluate history. Kupffer's claim that the situation regarding interpretation has become more difficult rather than easier since all interpretations harbour overt and covert political and ethical interests as Habermas (1966) has argued. All of those who offer a comprehensive interpretation must act as if they were the 'last' historians. The backward glance by the historian always requires freezing the frame of history, which is an illusionary act. Should a particular interpretation become the standard or classical explanation it must be misinterpreted, revised and updated by future generations. Deviations must occur because of changed historical circumstances. Kupffer cautions the spectator-reader to avoid any naive notions of truth and falsehood which still belong to positivist aesthetic viewpoints. Art and its interpretation, being ideological and therefore ethical and political in their intent, contribute to a culture's 'wanderings.'

By this Kupffer is alluding to Heidegger's question whether it is language that commands us or we who command language. By analogy the paradox has been extended to 'visual' language.

Kupffer is satirically equating the sighting of a UFO with artworks which, to many people, seem alien, impossible to comprehend. In order to ease their anxiety some attempts at explanation must be found.


Eisler, H.: Musik und Politik. Leipzig 1985, S.128. Kupffer is referring to positivist Marxist aestheticians who, since Zhadov and Plekanov, have claimed realist art to represent 'reality' as it truly is. Even an aesthetician of the magnitude of Lukacs claimed that realism was far superior to expressionism because it did not distort existence but presented it as it was.


Kupffer is referring to the well known philosophical discussion regarding the claims of artists about their works. This "intentionalist fallacy" was made famous by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley. "The Intentional Fallacy." The Verbal Icon. University of Kentucky Press 1954, pp.3-18.

This is a rather difficult passage. Kupffer is attempting to distinguish interpretations that are merely incremental. They build on and add to previous insights of predecessors but stay within the given paradigm. Other interpretations may be claimed to be 'misinterpretations.' They radically change the way we have 'read' artworks in the past.


Kupffer is referring to the generation of artists who might be called loosely the avant-garde at the fin de siécle.

Literally translated as "picture-newspaper." The Bild-Zeitung is a German newspaper, perceived to have an unsophisticated readership. The stories are consistently sensationalist and there are many bawdy pictures. (Sybille Anselm)


Kupffer is alluding to the problem of origins. This issue has become extremely problematic in the postmodern world. The current arguments in science revolve around the presuppositions of neo-Darwinism which claim punctuated evolution. In the arts this same argument translates as purposeful 'misinterpretation.' We can continually 'trace' back any artwork into a bottomless abyss. There is no 'ground' we can stand on to positivistically claim we have found the origins of any phenomenon.


Kupffer means that we recognize that the artwork is part of the socially constructed reality and that we do not harbour any pretense that it presents an objective truth.

Kupffer is alluding to Gadamerian hermeneutics and to the potential transformative nature of art. During the process of interpretation, an artwork may become the vehicle through which a person's entire consciousness might be transformed as new insights regarding society are internalized. See H. Gadamer, Truth and Method. Sheed and Ward, 1975 and note 4.

Kupffer uses the old German word Gefilde to refer to the sense of hearth. This has allusions to the bourgeois household where art is primarily decoration. (Sybille Anselm)

Benjamin, W.: Das Kuntwerk in Zeitalter seiner Technischen Repro-
Kupffer is referring to the reliance on experts which a guided tour perpetuates. Rather than grappling with their own interpretations, gallery visitors accept the official word as gospel thus furthering the myth that an objective and unbiased interpretation is being presented.

Kupffer is referring to the blind spots of our own culture. Such understandings have 'expired' because they are no longer in the public eye. Art can revive and shed light on such areas. There is never a shortage of artists who remind us of the societal palliatives from the negligence of our aged to the abuse of our pets.

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Art Educators' Responsibility to Cultural Diversity: or "Where Are You Goin Wid Alla My Stuff?"

Kristen G. Congdon

The responsibility of art educators to recognize and study the art and context of as many populations as possible is examined in this article. Examples of how artistic expressions have been borrowed, used in different contexts and otherwise removed from their original cultural context are given, and examples of ways that art teachers can help to recognize origins and the artistic functions of many cultures are suggested. By placing art in its context and studying it as it changes, students may begin to understand the artistic source, appreciate the importance of the creative context, and begin to see multi-cultural dimensions to artistic appreciation.

\[ \text{i want my stuff back} \\
\text{my rhythms & my voice} \\
\text{open my mouth} \\
\text{& let me talk ya outta} \\
\text{throwing my shit in the sewer} \\
\text{(Shange, 1975, p.53)} \]

This powerful expression by Ntozake Shange responds to the cultural invasion she knows as an Afro-American woman. Her history has been silenced, her expressions devalued or used and owned by Anglo-American society. These kinds of statements of protest, anger and pride are easily found in Afro-American literature especially since the '60s. Other cultural groups including various ethnic groups, feminist women, unrecognized and devalued occupational groups and differently abled people are beginning to demand recognition for their artistic expressions. They ask that their expressions be seen and heard, valued within their own contexts and appropriately credited (Blaney & Congdon, 1987). Speaking about ethnicity, Toelken (1981) reports: "It is not only the minority's art works that the larger society has often misunderstood and misrepresented. In addition, the manner in which they can be most appropriately appreciated has often been ignored by the overriding use of the formalist approach and formalist language in our criticism structures (Hamblen, 1984; Congdon, 1986). In fact, Albrecht (1968) goes so far as to
say: "This process represents not a military or political invasion of the world, but an artistic one" (p.393).

Art education, in large part, reflects the established art world's values and the educationally accepted theory of the day. Because of an adherence to the often narrowly defined views of acceptable art and art criticism structured by the art world, and so-called "correct" educational methodologies proposed by educational institutions, art educators have for the most part, often done a disservice (to put it mildly) to the culturally diverse populations of the world.

It is the responsibility of the art educator to recognize the art and content of as many populations as possible, including the critical approach taken to appreciate it. Students should learn respect for themselves and their neighbors in schools and other educational institutions by recognizing and appreciating quality works of art from diverse cultural groups. The lives of all students will be enhanced if they can view art from a variety of cultural perspectives, art criticism structures, and diverse approaches to aesthetic valuing.

Art teachers should attempt to identify the origin of the form and content of an art work, and give credit to and attempt to gain an understanding of its function. Often, work is "taken" from the minds and hearts of others, and those individuals and cultural groups are now asking for their deserved recognition. Just as secretaries in the movie 9 to 5 demanded credit for their creative energies stolen by their boss, Afro-American women justifiably want recognition for Bo Derick's cornrows. (Art educators often overlook these kinds of art expressions in their curricula). Matthews (1982) points out that many women will no longer "silently let Kenneth Nolan and Frank Stella be applauded for paintings that used quilt and Navajo motifs without insisting that these women-made artifacts be treated as seriously as man-made paintings" (p.6). The recognition of these ignored and undervalued art forms demands responses that focus our attention appropriately on their aesthetic value and meanings within their cultural context.

Talk about art is increasingly being recognized as an important means which enables us to see. When we begin to understand the power of speech, we can begin to acknowledge its importance in portraying meaning. J.E. Brown (1976) believes that the greatest disaster to happen to Native American groups has been the loss or weakening of their respective languages. This trend should not be allowed to continue with Native Americans or any other cultural group. Not only should art educators do our best to understand the perspectives embodied in varying languages, but we should acknowledge and utilize words, phrases, and dialects in the English language which may help to expand our perceptions (Congdon, 1986). "Language determines what we see and how we see it. Before we have a word for something, we can hardly see it at all. Once it is named we see it everywhere, in abstract as well as concrete things" (Bernard, 1981, p.375).

Two instances in which I was unable to understand a communication because of lack of language structure come readily to mind. The first came while videotaping an Afro-American furniture refinisher in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. On camera, and in conversations with me, the artist was articulate and clear (based on an evaluation from someone with academically trained standards for communicating). From time to time throughout the four-day shoot, he would turn to his family
and shop workers, speaking to them quickly in a dialect I could not decipher. John Mason was not being rude, he was simply being himself.

In the second instance, the speakers wanted me to understand them, but I did not have the necessary experiences to do so. During the late 1970's, while I was working in the Women's Section of the Milwaukee County Jail, the inmates and I jointly decided to produce a videotape on drug use in the inner city to show to the predominantly Anglo-American suburban audiences supporting our educational program. The women had loosely written a skit on which they improvised while they practiced. It involved a few people obtaining a variety of drugs from pushers and using them. The words, the phrases, and the dialect they used confused me. No academic course in drug use could have prepared me for this experience. This was a group of women with whom I had good rapport, and yet we became so frustrated with each other over issues of authenticity and communication that the video was never made.

But I learned something valuable: the means of expression is important. Learning to translate, to extend our perceptions, and to stretch our world views is a necessary part of good learning. The performers in this jail video should not necessarily have changed what and how they spoke. Doing so would have compromised their reality. In this case, other ways should have been found to get the message across (handouts could have been made with words, phrases and definitions; subtitles could have been used on the film; a workshop could have taken place) before the video was shown. The goal of communicating the drug reality could have been accomplished without taking away from the expressive reality of the participants. The two cultural groups could have found a way to talk and listen to each other without "being" all one way or another.

In the case of John Mason, and for many of the women in the jail experience, it was second nature for them to move from one very different way of speaking to that of the established Anglo-American world. Many Afro-Americans, Asians, Hispanics, Native Americans, and others have learned to make two (or more) worlds come together by taking Anglo-American forms of expression and creatively making them their own. For example, in what has become to be known as Afro-American folk art, distinct styles have been identified where "white forms and techniques become conduits for black ideals" (Vlach, 1978, p.150). Examples of these kinds of expressions may be found in quilts, walking sticks, ironwork, jugs and crocks, the banjo, shot-gun houses, concrete grave markers and modern coiled baskets. Anglo-American's use of Afro-American communication forms has often been exploitive, discrediting Afro-American people rather than respecting their contributions. The established art world needs to try harder to understand, for example, Afro-American expressions within their own context. When these contributions are understood and utilized in the dominant culture, such understandings convey dignity and respect for the place and people of origin.

For example, a class could study the metaphors of voyage and vision which are expressed in much Afro-American art.

The voyage represents both a desire for deliverance from the physical limitations of life--and an affirmation of belief that the world is full of majesty and mystery and worthy of scrutiny. It is a voyage from and a voyage to, a poignant yet proud expression of hope for temporal salva-
tion; the vision, too, promises redemptions and deliverance and is seldom primitive or moralistic, but is based on the hope of the salvation and even apotheosis of the maker in another more perfect world. (Livingston & Beardsley, 1982, p. 51)

Based on that statement, the student could study the work of Minnie Evans and her "visions" (Johnson & Ketchum, 1983); James Thomas and his "futures" (Ferris, 1975); or Philip Simmons and how he "arrives" at designs by "getting futures" (Vlach, 1975, p. 51). One can study the Afro-American tendency to reveal in sculptural form what already exists in the carving materials, as with Jesse Aaron (Livingston & Beardsley, 1982) and Harmon Young (Johnson, 1978). A teacher could then talk about how this approach is similar and different from that of Rodin, who said, "I don't make the hand—it's there inside. I just cut away everything that isn't hand" (quoted in Horwitz, 1975, p. 22); and of the traditional Eskimo Approach to carving, which is like singing a song that is within you: "When you sense a form emerging from ivory, you release it" (Carpenter, 1961, p. 362). There are likenesses here, but there are also expressions of differing cultures, of varying languages and world views.

These approaches should not be too easily simplified, and their origins should be remembered and understood. The way Julian Schnabel has used cracked plates is different from what Zora Neal Hurston's character, Grandma, means when she says to Janie, "Have some sympathy fuh me. Put me down easy, Janie. Ah'm a cracked plate" (1937, p. 37).

I want my own things
how i waz when i waz there
you cant have them or do
nothing wit them
stealin my shit from me
dont make it yrs
makes it stolen
somebady almost run off with
alla my stuff
(Shange, 1975, pp. 53-54)

Stealing, misplacing, misunderstanding, and ignoring a person's art, aesthetics, and expressions about them is debilitating. As art educators, we need to work much harder to broaden the scope of the art works we study in order to increase and celebrate the varying approaches that can be taken to art criticism, and to embrace the many functions art has for humanity.

A lengthy unit could be developed on art within a traditional Navajo context. Sandpainting could be done by males and weaving by females (Witherspoon, 1977), and this gender separation could be discussed in both the Navajo and the classroom context. Parts of the Navajo History textbook (Yazzie, 1971) could be read and Navajo curriculum guides (e.g., Chacon, Begay, Huenemann & Begay, 1978) could be followed, for example, to learn about weaving tools, looms, the function of weaving, and Spiderwoman, long before the actual weaving process is begun.

The emphasis on meaning and preparation in art rather than actual doing of the project could be emphasized with the Navajo-made films instigated by Worth and Adair (1972). The language of the Navajo, which makes it difficult to talk in anything but the present tense, should be discussed (Witherspoon, 1977), and children could attempt to see the world in a continual process of being and becoming, rather than placing so much emphasis on the past and future.

The cat's cradle string designs could be studied in terms of Navajo
stories and their relationship to the stars, the sun, the animals, and all of nature (Toelken, 1979), and the importance of repetition (as opposed to the valuing of innovation) can be proposed as a valuable characteristic of life and art. Since Navajo culture stresses a learning-by-observing rather than a "trial and error" approach (Saville-Troike, 1984), a teacher could represent the lesson in this fashion. For the Navajo, all knowledge is already present; it must only be learned. In this respect, education is more like cultural preservation than "changing truths."

A teacher could also explain how the Navajo are more careful about speaking than are most Anglo-Americans. This can be demonstrated by the teacher by sitting silently with a child before asking a question. Since traditional Navajos do not believe in saying their own names, because it violates "a sociolinguistic constraint...[and] a religious taboo" (Saville-Troike, 1984, p.47), a teacher could model this world view and attempt to explain it to the students, thus better assisting them in understanding other ways of approaching reality, values, and art.

Color theory can be taught from the Navajo perspective by using dyes rather than tempera paints, and by making blue and green one category while dividing black into two. During the winter months, while animals are hibernating, Navajo stories may be told. Students could study hogans, their shape, and the single door facing the rising sun (Hurdy, 1970). They might envision how living in a hogan would be different from their own homes, and what it would be like to be raised as a baby in a cradleboard, perpetually feeling securely hugged and placed in a vertical position rather than lying horizontal in a crib or on the floor (Toelken, 1979). One could discuss how the visual world and one's thought processes become more circular, rather than linear.

If art educators can present art to our students in a manner where both the context and the object are studied, the lessons will be more valuable. No one will be running off with anyone else's "stuff," and we will be creating an atmosphere in which learning about varying cultural groups can take place in a celebrative and respectful manner. Ridington (1981) paraphrases anthropologist William Duff: "The form of images from another culture may satisfy our eyes, but to satisfy the mind we must relate them to meaning in our lives" (p.246).

Students can study how something presents itself visually, why it is presented in such a manner, and how it relates to them as individuals and members of varying cultural groups. For example, students can learn how the Chilkat blanket expresses the Northwest Coast Indian idea that two figures can exist in the same place at the same time (Celebration, 1982; Holm & Reid, 1975). They might study how and why the art from these Northwest Coast Indian cultures varies only slightly (Holm, 1981), and how one piece can tell a story, placing something seemingly static in motion. One Tsimshian spoon, for example, is described by Duff (1981): "The figure in the centre...seems to be Raven who has become voraciously hungry, and wanting to eat the bait off the halibut fisherman's hook turns himself into a halibut, gets himself caught, and then when he is cooked he comes out of the halibut again" (p.211). As critics, students can question how these expressions relate to them and expand their worlds.

Teachers might also sensitize students to the artistic concerns of feminists, therefore engaging them in one of the more critical issues of our times. The recent activities of the Guerrilla Girls, their art,
and their motivations can be discussed (Heartney, 1987). Women's art at Greenham Common could be studied (Brett, 1986), and the class could discuss how that art might be different if the peace activities were instigated and owned by men.

A teacher could present the idea that the American English language is hostile to women (Bernard, 1981), and guide the students into speaking with language that more closely respects women and places them in equal partnership with naming the world. A Feminist Dictionary (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985) could help set guidelines and inspire discussion.

Students could attempt to develop a female model of creativity which "would emphasize sensitivity, nuance, openness, holism, and intuitive taking-in behaviors" (Collins & Sandell, 1984, p. 34). Lessons could then be taught in this mode, and art criticism structures could follow. As collective purpose, as expressed in quilting bees, could be discussed and tried by all students (Dewhurst, MacDowell, & MacDowell, 1979; Holstein, 1977). Women's art as biography in quilts, needlework, and denim could be studied, and then that theoretical approach could be applied to art expressions dominated by men. Kachina dolls, Eskimo dolls, and Anglo-American dolls could be compared visually and in terms of cultural functioning, keeping in mind gender expectations in the various cultures. If women and girls have their own "stuff," they can begin to determine what they want to own, what they wish to identify with, and which things they will care to disown. If viewed within their own cultural context, meanings of art forms will be more readily understandable to all students.

Teaching about art in its context may easily be extended to include political-cultural issues regarding museum exhibitions. Jones (1986) implores us to consider the museum's response to the Eskimos, who traditionally use art as a verb, as something to be created and not saved. If it is an act, rather than a product, should it not somehow be presented as such? For many Native Americans whose aesthetic values are identified more with process (motion) than product (lack of change), attempting to preserve art works compromises the impulse to re-create, to make something new, to become a part of the world as it once was.

Issues should also be raised over who owns certain stories, masks, and songs. For example, several cases have recently been brought to court in Alaska challenging an individual Tlingit who sold clan objects (Jones, 1986). The same problem exists with stories that have been published by Anglo-American ethnographers. If students know about the context of art objects they can ask when it is not in the best interests of the community of origin to place them in a traditional museum which may often substantially change their meaning. This is mine this ain't yr stuff now why don't you put me back & let me hang out in my own self.

Art educators cannot ignore art's context. If we do, we ignore humanity and deprive students of many opportunities to expand, to imagine, and to dream: history is denied, language ignored, and stealing overlooked. There is a richness of expression within all cultural groups. The recognition of that creative spirit within its context will result in an enriched society for everyone.
References


Jones, S. (1986). *Art by fiat, and other dilemmas of cross-cultural collecting*. In J.M. Vlach & S.J. Bronner (Eds.), *Folk art and art worlds*
Author's Note

The theme of this paper and some of its narrative, as well as the last part of the title, come from Ntozake Shange's book, *For Colored Girls Who have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*. The title comes from page 52.

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Aesthetic Socialization and the Young Child

Sally Hagaman

An examination of the process of aesthetic socialization at the preschool level reveals communication, through direct and indirect teacher behaviors and classroom environment, of "taken for granted" aesthetic assumptions. Examples, such as the use of naturalism or realism as the major criterion for judging art and reinforcement of social skills like diligence and neatness through art activities, are examined in light of educationist and teacher contexts (Keddie, 1971). Implications include the need for examination of aesthetic assumptions and their transmission by art educators who work with young children, train teachers, and/or plan art curricula.

Introduction
In a broad sense, all modes of knowledge transmission may be described as forms of socialization and enculturation. These processes entail acquisition of culturally defined motivations and perceptual habits, attitudes, skills, and understanding of standards and symbolic codes such as art and language. The schools in our society have been a major source of the determination of which types of knowledge are transmitted to young children and consequently a major force in the shaping and maintaining of our cultural identity (Cicourel, 1974; Hansen, 1979; Mayer, 1970).

An increasingly large number of young children start their formal art education before ever beginning elementary school. The preschool population, constantly expanding due to social, economic, and educational factors, is initiated into the world of organized art experiences at a tender age. The influences of the preschool teacher, curriculum, and environment upon the young child's aesthetic socialization are important concerns for the art educator. Few preschools hire art education specialists, yet preschool students do receive formal and informal experiences in the visual arts. How is the young child's understanding of the status role of art shaped by the preschool experience?

Aesthetic Socialization
Preliminary examinations of the processes of aesthetic socialization with children have underscored the prevalence of transmission of culturally embedded assumptions about what constitutes art and what standards should be used in determining one's reactions to it. Johnson (1981) found that the content of knowledge transmitted to children by docents during art museum tours reflected taken-for-granted aesthetic typifications and cultural assumptions. These included the typifications that certain objects are "beautiful, nice, elegant..." (p.62), that objects of most value belonged to the wealthy and privileged, and that the standard for judging a work is if one feels good or bad when looking at it. It was not made clear that interpretations being offered were not the only ways available to typify aesthetic experiences. In another study, Johnson (1982) found that children considered art to be those forms that were regarded in nineteenth century Europe as the fine arts. Painting, drawing, and sculpture were noted most frequently; twentieth century artforms (video, filmmaking, and television) as well as weaving, textiles, and environmental design were notably missing.
Rosario and Collazo (1981) discovered two aesthetic codes in practice in preschool classrooms. The first, a "productive code," allowed the children major control of aesthetic experiences. The teacher worked as facilitator, attempting to draw from the child his or her own aesthetic criteria for both production and appreciation. These criteria were rarely questioned or rejected by the teacher. Rosario and Collazo found much more evidence of the existence of a second code, a "reproductive" one, which defined the role of the teacher as direct determiner of aesthetic experiences. The teacher was direct shaper of child expression and creativity. Access to media was tightly controlled and the teacher worked to get the child to produce artwork that conformed to objective criteria and teacher-made models, and led the child to understand and value such external criteria. Rosario and Collazo contend that the reproductive code of aesthetics transmitted in the preschool classrooms reflected a rudimentary form of "naturalism," favoring careful adherence to the objective world as the model guiding all aesthetic production and appreciation.

As these studies indicate, the importance of the role of the teacher of young children in determining the very structure and content of aesthetic socialization can hardly be overestimated. A number of educators have stressed that the teacher is the most potent single factor controlling learning in the classroom (Flanders, 1970; Gage, 1978; Good, 1979). The language used by educators in response to children's artwork (and the artwork of others) is a major vehicle of cultural transmission. This language reflects a specific set of assumptions, expectations, and values about the work in question based on each teacher's repertoire of cultural knowledge and on the personal experience with which that knowledge is infused. Since individuals within society differ in their cultural repertoires and since the verbal communication process mediates between the teacher's intention and the message the child decodes, cultural knowledge and assumptions are never transferred completely intact. However, cultural knowledge can be and often is substantially shared from generation to generation (Hansen, 1979).

Not all cultural transmissions are verbal ones. First, the very choice of which activities are to be engaged in reflects culturally embedded assumptions about art. The preschool teacher's choice of paint or clay as media for art time implies an acceptance of painting and sculpture as artforms, whereas the delegation of block building to playtime, for example, ignores the possibility of environmental design inherent in that process. Secondly, the teacher's physical treatment of the objects of the child's production communicates whether the work is considered as art as well as what standards are involved in reacting to it. Display of work can be viewed as implicit acceptance of it. Apple and King (1965) note that kindergarten teachers only displayed children's artwork that conformed to their expectations. They also observed that diligence, perseverance, obedience, and participation were often considered more important than the aesthetic quality of the work. This observation may in part clarify the findings of Gardner, Winner, and Kircher (1975), which indicate that young children focus on the mechanics of production, the hard work involved in making art. They also dwell on legalistic preoccupation with rules: what one is allowed to paint and punishments for improper procedures.

Rosario and Collazo (1981) found that teachers least often saved and
displayed products from activities that were primarily child-initiated. The only child-initiated products that were judged as art were those resulting from painting activities. However, they observed no instance of painting done on paper other than that specifically designated by the teacher for painting (as on newspapers covering the easels or tables for instance) being valued as art or placed on display. Thus, these two avenues of cultural transmission, the designation of certain experiences as art activities and the physical authentication of products from those experiences as art (especially when the production process exemplifies appropriate classroom or societal behavior), constitute, together with verbalizations, major contributions to the content of aesthetic socialization and enculturation.

**Context**

Most of the behaviors mentioned above can be grouped under what Keddie (1971) has called the "teacher context" (p.135). It is the classroom world of what is, in which teachers plan and carry out activities, respond to students, and evaluate outcomes. In a participatory-observation study of a developmentally oriented preschool class, I found teacher context patterns of behavior similar to those described above. The class was chosen because of its reputation as part of an excellent program, as evidenced by a long waiting list of potential students and frequent references from educational authorities in the area. The class is somewhat atypical, for it receives support from the local school system, a nearby university, and state and federal funds. It employs a head teacher with a master's degree in early childhood education and two aides. The mostly middle class students range in age from three to five. Several children are developmentally delayed in speech due to hearing impairment and/or other problems. Several others are learning English as a second language.

I observed the class four days a week, for three to four hours each day, over a period of three months. Data were gathered through extensive notes, informal interviews, photographs, and program documents. The data were sorted into categories using content and comparative analysis and were reviewed frequently. Member checks were carried out periodically, wherein the participants were apprised of the nature, categorization, and analysis of the data collected, and were asked for further input.

Among the teacher context behaviors observed were the positive responses of teacher/aides to those students who worked diligently and neatly, following directions closely. Additionally, although teachers usually displayed all the products from all students, implicit approval of products which were more referential or representational or which conformed closely to a teacher-made model (as in the ubiquitous cotton-ball snowman or turkey made by tracing one's hand) was apparent in observations. These types of work were most often saved in student files to be discussed with parents. The exclusion of pieces which were not representational or like the model narrowed the scope of what was considered valuable. The head teacher explained,

"The parents like to see the kids' drawing ability is improving. When their pictures look like what it is supposed to be, the parents accept it as a valuable thing more easily. Uh...we know that art doesn't have to be that way, but that's what most parents like to see."

The indirect communication of this process is surely an important component of the young child's developing concepts of what is and
is not art, and further, what is and is not good art, authenticating the reproductive/naturalistic mode described by Rosario and Collazo (1981).

However, when questioned about art and art activities in their classrooms, the preschool teacher and aides involved in this study responded in the "educationalist context" (Keddie, 1971, p.135). Keddie states that this context is called into being when the presence of an outsider necessitates discussion of how things ought to be in school. Thus, these teachers indicated that the process of most classroom art activities was more important than the product, that products did not have to have recognizable imagery or follow a model to be good, and that time was spent talking about different types of art (the children's and the works of others). However, these educationalist context assertions simply were not true descriptions of what actually happened in the classrooms observed.

When questioned during member checks about such disparities between intent and practice, the head teacher admitted that she had never really recognized the contradictions between her theoretical contentions and what actually happened in her classroom. By the end of the three month study, observable changes were beginning to occur: teacher/aides talked with students more about their art work, developed response and sorting activities using art reproductions as well as images from magazines (spoons, cars, cereal boxes, etc.), and relied less heavily on activities that followed a teacher-made model.

**Art Education**

Implications for art education are many. First, those of us who work directly with young children need to explore our own cultural assumptions and determine in what fashion and to what degree we are transmitting them to our students. Do we (intentionally or not) encourage a naturalistic mode of aesthetic production and appreciation which contributes to the continuing public aesthetic code of correspondence to nature in the visual arts? Are praising and displaying the preschooler's initial attempts at symbolic representation simply encouragement of the child's creative and developmental growth or does this action more potently begin a continuing transmission of cultural judgments about the nature and standards of art? Do we conduct critical discussions about the nature and importance of the role of art and artists in our own and other societies, even at the preschool and primary levels? Do we in any way attempt to assess the meanings which young children are developing about art?

Secondly, the questions raised above apply as aptly to those art educators involved in teacher training. Future art teachers need to become aware of the effects of their own formal education (as well as the effects of more informal agencies of cultural transmission such as the home and the media) upon their cultural knowledge and assumptions. Those of us involved in training art teachers should raise such critical issues. Equally important is increasing the awareness of the processes of aesthetic socialization in preservice and inservice preschool and elementary teachers. Denno's (1977) study showed that the profession of elementary teaching attracted persons who are politically conservative, conforming, and submissive. She felt that such characteristics caused teachers to reward similar conforming behavior in their students and discourage constructive deviation. Unless such teachers are led to examine their own beliefs
about the nature of art, one can expect to continue to find a prevailing reproductive code of aesthetic transmission in classroom structure and interactions between teacher and student.

Third, those of us involved in developing and implementing art curricula must examine choices made concerning inclusion and exclusion of particular activities and objects for response. Should we continue to emphasize the fine arts of nineteenth and twentieth century Europe and the United States, strengthening the public view of art as a basically hedonistic, elitist adjunct to real life? Should we continue to emphasize the making and exhibition of artifacts (Janesick, 1982) to the exclusion of critical examinations of the social and cultural contexts in which they are produced?

In sum, an examination of the processes of aesthetic socialization observable in the education of the young child reveals a variety of modes of knowledge transmission, many apparently unintentional or, at least, unexamined. Recognition of the modes and effects of these transmissions is of continuing importance to the practice of art education.

References


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Another Look at the Aesthetics of the Popular Arts

Edward G. Lawry

About twenty years ago, Abraham Kaplan delivered a lively and memorable paper to the American Philosophical Association on the aesthetics of the popular arts. Appearing during the heyday of formalist criticism of the arts in America, the clear condemnation of the popular arts in his opening paragraph surprised no one. "Aesthetics," Kaplan said, is so largely occupied with the good in art that it has little to say about what is merely better or worse, and especially about what is worse. Unremitting talk about the good, however, is not only boring but usually inconsequential as well. The study of dis-values may have much to offer both aesthetics and criticism for the same reason that the physiologist looks to disease and the priest becomes learned in sin. Artistic taste and understanding might better be served by a museum of horribilia presented as such. It is from this standpoint that I invite attention to the aesthetics of the popular arts.1

But many things have happened in the last twenty years to make us want to rethink the casual identification of popular art with "dis-value" that Kaplan takes for granted: the rise in popularity of folk music, the transformation of rock and roll by the Beatles and others, the advent of poster art, the ever increasing sophistication of advertising, the power of television, the seriousness of film critics, the strong presence of modern dance, and full-scale attempts (at least in the 60's) at street theater and guerrilla theater. All this, during the gradual eroding of the dominance of formalist criticism, ought to make us reevaluate popular art once more. Moreover, there is a special reason why professional educators should think carefully about popular art. To a significant degree, teachers transmit cultural tastes. If they have nothing to say about the art that a vast majority of students are already committed to, they will lose credibility in recommending the exploration of the so-called high arts. Although I am not advocating an acceptance of the position, it is clearly the case that for the majority of children through young adults, Springsteen, not Bach, is the boss.

What I would like to do is ask you to question the sometimes rigid distinctions within the arts that are often too easily accepted. Ask yourself, for example, if the dancing of Fred Astaire during his prime was high art or popular art? How about the dancing of John Travolta in Saturday Night Fever? How about the break dancing in the movie Flashdance? The questions here are interesting partly because of what they overlook—namely that the three cases of the "art" of dancing I mention were all "movie dancing," and it is perhaps questionable if movie dancing is really a performance of dance at all.2 But let us ignore the question "Is it live, or is it Memorex?" for the time being and concentrate just on the liveliest authentic cases of the popular and the high arts.

High and Popular Arts

How might we go about trying to distinguish the high arts from the popular arts? First we might think of the nature of the communication we get through the arts. It is a venerable tradition to think that high art somehow ennobles people, and puts them into contact with the great human themes that enlarge
their sensibilities. Though the more abstract arts (dance and especially music) have had more trouble fitting this model than representational painting and literature, all the arts have had this claim made on their behalf. In an important way I think that this view is true. Power and glory, despair and wretchedness, the triumph of the spirit, the betrayal of country, family or lover, ambition, radical ingratitude, hope and pain, and the healing of the community: are these not the very important human themes in them, anywhere from the exotic anti-discrimination themes of Culture Club to the familiar simple themes of the heart that country music is so famous for. I am not trying to convince anybody that Boy George and Loretta Lynn are the artistic equals of Pavarotti and Sills, but only to call attention to the undisputed fact that their music contains important human themes.

Some of you may be uncomfortable by my discussion of the high, noble truths of popular art because you

trm_nes m_ercially, in a way so clearly tied to an appeal to the mass market that the comparison with the themes of high art is artificial of sophistic. In that case you may be thinking about the difference between high art and popular art as the difference in seriousness of purpose of the artists. It is something like this that Ted Kachel, past scholar-in-residence for the Tulsa-based American Theater Company, had in mind in a two-part article in the newsletter of the Tulsa Arts and Humanities Council. There, in distinguishing the popular arts from the serious performing arts, he says of the relationship between artists and audience that "In one case, the transaction is primarily a business relationship, a monetary exchange, a quid pro quo, while in the other, it is primarily a spiritual encounter." I will avoid commenting on how much economics enters into the minds of serious performers, leaving that to your meditation on human nature, but when I consider popular artists, I would insist that a central motivation for most popular artists is to perform according to standards of the craft (however it is conceived). I am reminded of this fact in a very powerful way by the brilliantly choreographed movie Fame. Perhaps it is the black magic of art, but that movie is wonderfully convincing
that the motivation of serious and popular artists are of a piece. This can be corroborated by a plenitude of independent evidence. It is surely impossible to imagine that the concerts of Janis Joplin were not spiritual encounters, just as it is impossible not to believe that something special is happening at a Bruce Springsteen concert. These popular artists and most of the others one can think of are hardly cynical about their activities. They are surely not indifferent to the business aspects of their profession, but that does not stop them from being concerned about the quality of their work and about the satisfactions and changes it effects in their audiences. Because popular art is fleeting (being absorbed into the category of high art if it stays around too long), there is little of the self-conscious sense of participating in a cultural institution the way there might be for someone who was about to direct Hamlet. Nevertheless, the seriousness of commitment, the motivation to excellence, the concern for the quality of reception in an audience can present us with no strong line to demarcate high and popular arts.

Perhaps a promising way to distinguish the high and the popular arts is to argue that the greater concern for formal beauty in high art and the relative lack of form in the popular arts is enough to explain the intuitive division. The point deserves a bit of explanation since it is almost a truism among aestheticians that form and content are inextricably wedded and that formlessness is not a logical possibility.

Consider the helpful framework that Meyer Abrams uses to categorize critical approaches. Those critics who are concerned to say how far the art work represents or resembles the wider world take up a mimetic orientation. Those critics who concern themselves with the special character of the artist-producer of the art work take up an expressive orientation. Those critics who concern themselves with the effect of the art work upon the audience take up a pragmatic orientation. And those critics who concern themselves with the intrinsic pattern or logic of the art work take up an objective orientation.4 Although the orientations are full of overlapping interests and each orientation contains critics who are in many ways very different from one another, the schema can help clarify the frequently made distinction between high and popular arts made on formalist bases.

During the 20th century, the objective orientation has been dominant in criticism of the arts of high culture, often battling the pragmatic orientation. We might think of the Clive Bell-Roger Fry school of formalism in the visual arts and the school of New Criticism that had such a heavy influence on literary criticism during the middle decades of this century. Both movements had the effect of concentrating attention on the patterning of aesthetic elements in seeking the key to the value of the art object. Both were highly critical of art objects which sacrificed coherence and harmony of the organic art object in order to create isolated "special effects" in the audience. Very often in criticism of this sort, works were criticized as "sentimental," meaning that they were making efforts to get a reaction of the audience that was not "earned" through the manipulation of aesthetic materials.5

While every content necessarily has come packaged in a form, the popular arts are often thought to sacrifice the coherence and integrity of their form for the rhetorical impact of content. As the director depicted in the movie Sweet Liberty explains his fail-safe formula for making successful movies, no matter
what else you do, be sure to "defy 
authority, destroy property and take 
off your clothes." This charge of a 
relative lack of concern for form in 
the popular arts versus the high 
arts is commonly made. Soap operas 
are not really candidates for high 
art because they have no beginnings, 
middles and ends, though they do 
have a high degree of intensity in 
dramatic conflict (so high that it 
is almost ludicrous). Popular music 
cannot be sustained for any longer 
than 2 1/2 minutes at a time because 
of the lack of complicated musical 
structure, yet its rhythms are vital 
and insistent (mindlessly so, say 
its critics). Many movies depend 
upon the personal appeal of the 
actors rather than aesthetically 
created "characters" so that it is 
easy to remember that Jennifer Beals 
played the lead character in Flash-
dance, but impossible to remember 
the name of her character (which 
suggests we are less interested in 
the fiction presented for aesthetic 
pleasure than for the social or 
moral pleasure of knowing the actual 
personality and beauty of the 
actors). In the end, this charge of 
a sacrifice of form to the more 
commercial possibilities of content 
really is a logical extension of the 
two previous criticisms; the distinc-
tion between substantial and 
trivial themes and the distinction 
between varying artistic motiva-
tions. But from the point of view 
of the formalist, it is not a 
question of whether popular art does 
not have important themes or even 
that the artists are more interested 
in money than aesthetics. The 
formalists just want to know what 
gets wrought with the themes by the 
seriousness. Whether the artists 
have the dedication to submit to 
rigorous training, whether they have 
a desire for money and an indiffer-
ence to their art, the point of 
those who make this kind of distinc-
tion is simply that popular art 
forms are just simplistic or motley, 
and therefore should not be admitted 
to the ranks of high art.

This kind of criticism seems to 
me often correct, and extends to a 
much larger percentage of works of 
popular art as opposed to high art. 
Nevertheless, we make a crucial 
mistake, especially serious for 
pedagogy, if we think that this way 
of drawing the lines distinguishes 
two kinds of beast: the high art 
which has form and the popular art 
which does not. Rather, the dis-
tinction operates within both high 
art and popular art, and we are 
forced in the end to realize that 
high art and popular art are terms 
which are externally descriptive of 
aesthetic items, not insights into 
the essence of distinct categories. 
Some of the simple songs of Robert 
Burns are only read in classes of 
literature, but have the small form 
and simplicity of a typical pop hit. 
Some albums of popular music and 
certainly many films which are aimed 
at a mass audience are exceptionally 
well-crafted and exhibit a sophisti-
cated artistic intelligence.

It is more typical to recognize 
the minor gems of high art than it 
is to recognize the more formidable 
works of popular art. So, if you 
will indulge me, I will do a little 
formal analysis of the movie Flash-
dance to demonstrate my point that 
popular art can be well-formed and 
complicated. I choose this example 
for a number of reasons: 1) it is a 
combination of many arts: music, 
dance, drama; 2) it centers around a 
theme of the high arts versus the 
popular arts; and 3) it has rarely 
been taken seriously as worthwhile 
art.

**Analysis of Flashdance**

The action of Flashdance is 
minimal. An eighteen-year-old girl, 
on her own, and improbably employed 
as a welder in a steel mill, works 
at night as a popular dancer in a 
blue-collar bar and yearns to dance 
in serious ballet. In spite of her
lack of training, she summons the courage to try out for the classical repertory in the steel town of Pittsburg. The real point of the movie is the theme of striving for and risking for higher things without losing your humanity. The theme tightly concentrates the action and the characters. It is played out not only in Alexandra, the central character, but in two parallel characters. Jeanne, Alexandra's good friend, practices for two years for an ice skating competition which she loses because she falls twice during her performance. Richie, the cook in the blue-collar bar where Alex works as a dancer and Jeanne as a waitress, wants to be a stand-up comedian. With only a little success locally, he takes off late one night for Los Angeles to try to make it. He comes back quickly, a failure, for reasons which are obscure. All three of these characters think of their attempts to succeed as a move to a higher reality. Alex especially admires the classical ballet to which she aspires as a wondrous and out-of-reach life.

The move to a higher reality is symbolized visually in the movie by a number of shots where the characters are moving through long, expansive corridors. Once, when Alex first stops to pick up an application for the repertory, she walks down a comparatively narrow corridor where the dancers are stretching and warming up. The room in which she finally has her audition is unlike a stage by being significantly longer vertically than horizontally. We find her developing her love for Nick, her steel mill boss, by running with him through warehouses or old buildings. She lives at the end of a narrow alley in whose distance we see her bicycle several times. Even the stage at Mawby's on which she does her flashdance is a thrust stage - almost a walkway.

Another strong visual image is tied to the crucial theme of character strength. The movie pits the honesty and hardworkingness of the blue-collar character against the sleaziness of the pornographic world into which one can fall and also against the artificially and smugness of the higher class territory which comes with success. The idea of character strength is underscored by the strong geometrical images of architecture which punctuate the film. Mawby's Bar and the Carnegie Music Hall in Pittsburg are shown several times in foursquare frontal images which last several seconds in the screen. In contrast, the only images we get of Zanzibar, the topless dive to which Jeanne gravitates in her short-term loss of self-respect, are oblique. In fact, the facade of Zanzibar itself is curvilinear, not cleanly geometric like the strength exhibited by the Music Hall or Mawby's. Another interesting reinforcement of this theme is Grunt, Alex's dog, who looks more like a cross between a pig and a small bull than a dog. The dog is strong and loyal and reflects the ideals that we are supposed to admire in the characters.

At one point in the film, when Alex, true to her hard work ethic, refuses to attend the audition that Nick has set up for her through his connections on the Arts Council, Nick says, "You give up your dream, you die." Nick seems to have almost given up his dream, when in his youth, he married an upper-class blonde because, as he says, "It was the safe thing." But somehow, he realized that one should not go on with the safe thing and divorced her. It is one of the worst defects of the film that the essence of Nick's success is extremely vague. He comes off as a weak character (and surely is the weakest lines) compared with the two women and the puny cook-comic, Richie. Richie
takes a punch which breaks his nose to help Alex out of a jam. Alex goes and fetches Jeanne from Zanzibar because she is her friend. And Hannah, a kind of European godmother to Alex, takes the time and patience to encourage Alex into her possible career in the classical ballet. Hannah, by the way, is the only human evidence that the strength of character is part of the high culture ethic. Her house is shot foursquare by the camera. She knows ballet from the inside and speaks well for it. There is a hint, however, that like the younger characters in the movie, she is a failure. But it is Hannah, Alex, Richie, and Jeanne who are the people in the movie who are supportive, loyal, and honest. And insofar as that is the case, they represent strong human values which remain superior to any kind of success. Therefore, Nick is importantly wrong when he says, "You give up your dream, you die." A superficial analysis could take that as a tag line for the movie and assume it is a simplistic moralizing to "strive, to seek to find, and not to yield." But this moral is crucially conditioned by the theme of retaining friendship, humanity, and self-respect.

At the same time that it encourages the dream of the higher reality, the movie celebrates the best of the lower class, precisely insofar as that best embodies the spiritual strength that the theme spotlights. At one point in the film, we see Alex and Jeanne walking home and stopping to watch some street break-dancers. It is a great delight and a stroke of great wit to see Alex incorporating the flashy back spin of break-dancing in her audition at the classical repertory.

Most viewers of the movie assume Alex succeeds in getting accepted into the repertory school after going all out at her audition, but the facts are left ambiguous. We see her at the end laughing and running out of the audition hall to Nick and Grunt who are waiting for her. Earlier, Alex asked Hannah if the principal dancer always gets flowers at the end of her performance and how that felt. Hannah said, "You let me know." Nick and Grunt wait for Alex with the bouquet of roses and she extracts one and gives it to Nick just as it happens with classical dancers. Since Nick has bought the flowers before he knows if Alex has made the company, it is clear that the symbol of actual dance success has been transmuted into a symbol of courage and character. It is that which the movie makes important, not mere striving to follow one's dream. Many aspects of character, parallelism of plot, symbols and images have cooperated to make a picture with complex and substantial form.

Flashdance has its flaws, no doubt; in its inability to handle clearly the character of Nick, in its failure to give a satisfactory explanation of Alex's initial situation of independence, and in its caricature of the upper-class figures who appear in the film. But it is a strong and reasonably well-integrated film. The point I am trying to make is that there are analyses of these popular works of art which are of a piece with what we might do with serious ones.

**Pedagogical Implications**

I hope the pedagogical implications of this argument are obvious. If popular art is not different in kind from high art, and if our students are inundated with popular art, it remains for us to exploit these facts rather than deny them. It might be worth our time to attend to the much vaunted organic character of art when thinking about our posture toward aesthetic education. If we think of each work of art as having a kind of life and personality of its own, then our task is not...
to separate the high from the popular, but the better from the worse wherever it appears. It is equally obvious, I hope, that such evaluations must appeal to the works on their own terms. When, in our civics lessons, we hold up Abraham Lincoln to the admiration of schoolchildren, his keen intelligence and wit, his strong moral fiber and his political sagacity, we do not thereby recommend that they lose personal affection for their own fathers, who may be below average in intelligence, lack a sense of humor, and not have much practical sense. When it comes to taste in human beings, we always recommend that we try to see the best that is in a person and that we make room for that in the economy of our assessment. While we might recognize a certain universality in the great souls of history, we do not stop loving our family and local friends even as we recognize a certain idiosyncrasy in our doing it.

If we can get students to think honestly, carefully, and cogently about what they locally encounter, then they may be able to use that general approach in opening up the more universal. But we must stop thinking that what is local is by that fact not worthy to be held in the pantheon. Even the greatest and most refined sensibilities have had quirks in their tastes. Take a great poet like Yeats and ask him to compose an anthology of modern verse (as Oxford Press did) and you may be surprised to find some very obscure Irish poets represented there.6 I don't think we should be in the business of making perfect tastes, but rather in helping people to appreciate the art they come into contact with and of putting them into contact with art which seems to have satisfied many over a long period of time.

That doesn't require that we take away their popular favorites. How can we avoid realizing that a fair amount of the clash between the popular and the high arts is a class matter? But even if we don't want to do away with class distinctions, we need to build a society in which everyone can respect the value that is truly enjoyed at every level of society. Years ago, C.S. Lewis wrote a lovely little book called An Experiment in Criticism.7 In it, he tried to conduct an experiment by using the hypothesis that there are no bad books, just bad readers. Those if us who love the art that is in the canon of the best and want our children to love it too, will have a much easier time of it if we can show them that we take what they like seriously. Then we can talk to them about it and make it more likely that they will be able to take what we like seriously. As we do that, we may discover that there is more to take seriously in the popular arts than we had previously imagined.

Footnotes


2 The technological advances of the last hundred years have complicated the high art/popular art distinction enormously. In addition to the new arts of technology, like film and photography, there has been an unprecedented delivery into popularly accessible forms of what is regarded as high art: from the reproductions of works of visual art in books to the presentation by radio, record and tape of great orchestras playing works by classic composers. To what extent the availability of art to masses
of people makes for a popular art regardless of content or form is a question I want to ignore. Like Kaplan, I am assuming a rough and ready distinction between works that fall into generally acknowledged classes of high and popular art while admitting that this distinction is easier to assume for Kaplan.


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Understanding Popular Culture: The Uses and Abuses of Fashion Advertising

Mary Stokrocki

Today's young people are bombarded by messages. They should be taught to evaluate what they hear, to understand how ideas are clarified or distorted, and to explore how the accuracy and reliability of an oral [visual] message can be tested (Boyer, 1983, p.92).

Students are often manipulated by media messages and they are unaware of the uses and abuses of the media by advertisers. In many ways such manipulation makes students dependent on materialistic rewards, regardless of moral concern. As a remedy, Lanier (1966) advocates developing a critical consciousness, "an informed awareness of the social forces which oppress our lives." (p.23).

In the past art educators have largely stressed the fine arts, mostly ignoring the popular arts, such as television, movies, comics, and advertisements. The fine arts, however, often are far removed from students' everyday lives, while the popular arts are their daily stimulation. Thus, the study of popular art is a logical place to start training students in critical thinking.

Hilsabeck (1984) believes that the study of popular culture is one of the essential tasks of the Carnegie Report (National Association of Secondary Principals, 1983), which advocates the linking of technology to learning and the taking advantage of the information explosion. This task involves understanding the origins, messages, changes, and impact of mass culture on society. Indeed, many false myths and stereotypes are created by the media and advertising.

The purpose of this article is to focus on the uses and abuses of one aspect of popular culture: fashion advertisement. A brief account of its historical evolution is first given and then its current practices and content are analyzed. By focusing on one popular magazine, Vogue (November, 1987), fashion advertising's stereotypes and thematic, expressive, and formal elements are revealed. Next, a series of questions rates the advertisements as the worst, most boring, most honest, most imaginative, and best. Finally, the superlative advertisement in the category, "most intriguing," is critiqued in-depth as a model for students to use.

The research expands the ideas of Synnott (1983) in his visual analysis of gender presentation in the New York Times Sunday Magazine. He discovered that "over a quarter (28%) of the female ads display women as somehow not normal: extremely aggressive, crazy, exposing themselves in public or, in a word, "upside-down" (p.56). Through guiding questions, an analytical discussion should help art teachers develop students' critical understanding of fashion images and their role in developing attitudes in contemporary society.

How Did the Fashion Industry Develop?

In the beginning, fashion advertising was a socially leveling industry, in that it contributed to dissolving class and social distinctions in dress. Ready-made clothing was first designed for the function-
al purposes of mobile working-class people in specialized jobs (Ewen & Ewen, 1982). "Clothes of this sort were called "slops." In fact, "Brooks Brothers started the first "slopshop" around 1810" (p.164). Such cheap clothing was in demand for Negro slaves and soldiers during the Civil War. New York City's garment industry grew in direct proportion to such demands. With the growth of the printing industry that advertised the new styles, came the proliferation of the concept of image, that is, styled goods designed to keep up with the new social demands. Simultaneously came the exploitation of sweatshop labor, the palaces of consumption, and the sirens of style. "Mass fashion afforded immigrants the possibility to be somebody in a new world, by rejecting the indignities of the past and accommodating them to the world of display in which they sought their future" (p.210).

**How Are Women Stereotyped?**

A stereotype is a standardized mental image and an oversimplified idea and feeling about it. The fashion industry exploits beauty by stereotyping women as young and sexy, without any identity, and as predominantly white. To be old and ugly is not acceptable and makes a woman doubtful of her own self worth. In the November, 1987 issue of *Vogue*, all of the women in advertisements except three are young. Older women appear in smaller ads advertising aging cream or a fitness resort. One ad features the aging Audrey Hepburn as a legend selling Blackglama Mink. All of the models are white except three. One attractive black woman advertises flatware, which is bizarrely arranged as earrings, inferring that black women wear large (gaudy) dangling appendages. In contrast, men, who appear in four ads, are allowed to look older and more rugged, like the Marlboro cowboy, implying that men are still attractive at older ages.

**How Are Women Portrayed, as Working or Acting?**

Out of 458 pages in this issue of *Vogue*, approximately 158 are advertisements featuring women's fashions consisting of clothes (36%), perfume (13%), makeup or body lotions (13%), jewelry (10%), and watches (8%), furs (9%), and hair-coloring (6%). (See Table 1.) Women are primarily portrayed as working to advertise clothes and make-up and to act as a decoration or an object of desire, while men are featured as active workers, such as a speedboat racer in an ad for Vantage "high performance" cigarettes. None of the ads depict women performing normal jobs. Most of the women are depicted as standing around (67%), sitting (18%), walking (7%), lying down (4%), and jumping (3%). (See Table 2.)

**What Themes Sell Products?**

What themes are utilized to sell products? Twentieth century advertisers now use blatant sexuality, obsession, the bizarre, and snob appeal to sell their products. The practice of exposing the body is common (26%). Seventy of the ads feature nude women, such as Stoppers Perfume and Prescriptive skin care. Thirty of the ads feature such things as the plunging neckline, the French-cut thigh, and undergarments. Even a woman's nipple accidently (but deliberately) slips out of her dress. Fashions are highly provocative; for instance, Cache uses the active sense of the word "provoke" to feature looks for intriguing nights. Just when I wonder if men...
would ever be photographed in such a way, along comes Perry Ellis with its ad for men's underwear, in which a man photographed from the rear, three-quarter view, lifting himself up in a typical female pose (Figure 1).

Advertisers are competing to create the most perverse and bizarre advertisements (12%). The intention is to shock. Obsession is a new key theme in advertisement, epitomized in Calvin Klein's new perfume called Obsession. Advertisers attempt to
arouse fantasies and to promote passions in a perfume ad by Fendi, which features a girl kissing a Roman male statue; to provoke incest by posing a young girl among her dolls in Christine Dior undergarments; to suggest murder in a perfume ad for Poison by Christine Oior; to cater to homosexuality with the (double entendre) line "pantyhose for men"; and to feature drugs with the perfume Opium. Advertisers still use subliminal seduction to sell many of their products (Key, 1973). In one of the Vogue ads, a woman bends to kiss a (penis-shaped) bottle of L'Air du Temps perfume by Nina Ricci in a most suggestive way (Figure 2). Females are featured as more aggressive in behavior than men, for example, in an ad for Torrids Haircolor by Clairol, a woman is undressing a man, and in an ad for Charlie perfume, a girl has her hand on a man's derriere.

Snob appeal, another theme, is most evident in ads for furs (28%). A red beaver example catches the eye, begging the question is it real or fake? Leather clothes are also quite popular. Finally, all five watch advertisers feature their watches as status symbols; for example, Movado is depicted as the museum watch, as the esquire (ESQ), and as a "classic" with Roman numerals. (See Table 3).

**What Kind of Facial Expressions are Dominant?**

Fifty-two percent of the models' facial expressions in the ads are cold and expressionless. Others are tempting (9%), romantic (8%), and happy (21%). (See Table 4.) The most happy models are ironically in the cigarette ads. Typical is the exuberence they express in the Virginia Slims Ultralight ad. Pouty expressions (8%) are now fashionable for that spoiled, demanding look.
Even the Bizarre (.08%) is highlighted in the death-like face of the model for Poison perfume.

What Colors Predominate and What Do They Express?

Black is the outstanding color of the issue with 47% of the fashion entries, followed by white (20%), brown (17%), pink (8%), and red (7%). (See Table 5.) Black seems to suggest the sensual, the sophisticated, and the mysterious, while white and brown imply elegance; brown being the natural color of all the furs.

What Forms or Compositions are Dominant?

The way an advertisement is composed or arranged is very revealing. Forty-six percent of the advertisers position the female figure in the middle of the page (See Table 6). Only three of these are dynamic; they fill the page. Nineteen percent feature a diagonal arrangement and are often the most exciting ads (Figure 3). The big/little comparison or foreground/background image (17%) produce contrast. Some ads "off-center" a single female image (11%) and others use a symmetrical side-by-side image (3%). Formal analyses suggests that advertisers use size and direction to sensationalize images.

The Most Intriguing Ad: An In-Depth Analysis

What is the most intriguing ad and why is it so? By using Feldman's (1970) method of art criticism (description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment) as a guide perhaps a judgment can be made. An advertisement for Anne Klein II perfume (Figure 4) will be used as
Description: What do you see? What images are represented? The advertisement consists of three components—the product displayed full size, with a black cast shadow in the form of a female, and the words "The Fragrance" at the bottom.

Analysis: What lines, shapes, colors, textures are repeated? Diagonal lines both unify and add excitement to the ad. The glass bottle further refracts the form. Color consists of muted purple-grey shadows and the golden-yellow watch suggesting a subtle complementary contrast. The texture is smooth and the feeling is mellow.

Interpretation: What meaning or message does this ad suggest to you? What first appears as a simple advertisement later suggests mystery, both in its shadowy form as well as its limited copy. This understatement coaxes one to look further or to wonder about this new fragrance.

Judgment: No sensationalism is necessary here. Good formal design, consisting of diagonal line and color contrast, creates a most
The image of women has been principally distorted, their being depicted as decorative, sexual, bizarre, and desirable: an "object." "The pursuit of beauty through consumption is considered among the modern skills of survival for women" (Ewen, 1976, p.181).

While compared to Synnott's (1983) finding that 28% of the ads in The New York Times presented women as not normal, my findings suggest worse: none of the women are portrayed at normal jobs; they predominantly stand around doing little or nothing (67%); they still expose themselves; their facial expressions are cold and expressionless (52%); and they are getting blatantly more aggressive. Sensational images, full of naked women, gaudy jewelry, and camera tricks cheapen the art of advertising. Women are led to believe that their first duty is to attract attention and that the cold and demanding look is proper behavior. Consumerism is shaping what to buy, how to act, how to dream, and how to understand the world. Henry (1963/65) calls this kind of thinking "pecuniary philosophy based on pseudo-truth" a false statement made as if it were truth, but not intended to be believed. No proof is offered, "...and no one looks for it" (p.47). Lynes (1949/1980) further warns that:

*Taste is like conscience; all have it, but they may blunt it; drown its voice, and finally so deaden themselves to its power as to prevent its warnings and warp its influence...*(p.80).

**Implications for Art Teaching**

The American public, including schoolchildren, must be educated to critically differentiate between the counter-productive and the socially constructive messages of our times. Art teachers can help students discriminate manipulative techniques in magazine and video ads through guided questions, such as: What is the most honest advertisement? Which is the worst advertisement? What is the most boring one? Which one is the most exotic? These ads can be evaluated for style as well as content.

Examples of award-winning and uplifting advertising can also be photographed or videotaped and discussed. For instance, Wheatena's ad "Toast to Women's Eternal Sex Appeal" represented a far more respectable image of femininity (in old age) in comparison to the more seductive kinds (Lois, 1977). Realism has been found to be the most effective advertising technique for many products. One of the most ironic examples of critical advertising was an award-winning commercial protesting the killing of animals for their furs and skins, sponsored by The Citizens Coalition (Cannes Goods, 1984). This ironic film clip featured fur-clad women being clubbed and dragged across the ice, with the message, "Fur, You Deserve It!".

Art teachers can even guide students to evaluate one advertise-
ment in depth using Feldman's (1970) descriptive, analytical, interpretive, and judgmental stages, as in my evaluation of the ad for Anne Klein II perfume. Finally, students can then be encouraged to find examples of unethical advertising and to make their own advertisements criticizing a product, like cigarettes, soaps, and fashions. Art education must make the study of art more relevant to young people by helping them become more critical of the uses and abuses of art in society.

Table 1
Types of Fashion Advertisements in Vogue (November 1987)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>(57) 36 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfume</td>
<td>(20) 13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makeup</td>
<td>(20) 13 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>(16) 10 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furs</td>
<td>(15) 9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watches</td>
<td>(12) 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haircoloring</td>
<td>(10) 6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(8) 5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(158) 100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Advertisements Portraying Women Working or Acting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing Around</td>
<td>(94) 67 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting</td>
<td>(25) 18 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>(10) 7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying Down</td>
<td>(6) 4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jumping</td>
<td>(4) 3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(1) 0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Jobs</td>
<td>(0) 0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(140) 100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Themes That Sell Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Perverse and Bizarre</td>
<td>(17) 12 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total/Partial</td>
<td>(7)/(30) 26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nudity</td>
<td>(40) 28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snob Appeal</td>
<td>(46) 33 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(140) 100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Dominant Face Expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cold &amp; Expressionless</td>
<td>(64) 52 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>(26) 21 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempting</td>
<td>(11) 9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic</td>
<td>(10) 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pouty</td>
<td>(10) 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bizarre</td>
<td>(1) 0.08 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(122) 100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Dominant Clothes Colors and Their Expression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>(40) 47 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>(17) 20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>(15) 17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>(7) 8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>(6) 7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(85) 100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
Dominant Form or Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form or Composition</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle-of-the-Page</td>
<td>(64) 46 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagonal</td>
<td>(26) 19 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big/Little Contrast</td>
<td>(24) 17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-Center</td>
<td>(15) 11 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>(7) 5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side-by-Side</td>
<td>(4) 3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(140) 100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


Mary Stokrocki is an Associate Professor of Art Education at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH.
Toward an Aesthetic Androgynous Mentality in Society: A Personal View

Duke Madenfort

When I was an adolescent, I spent an unusual amount of time indoors, alone, drawing and painting. I preferred staying inside doing art to going outside and playing games like baseball and football with other boys. The fact that drawing and painting, as traditionally and conventionally practiced, are solitary acts and done mostly in studios away from the distractions of the outer world and the, to me, boring talk of "ordinary" people didn't bother me at all.

The truth is that as much as I liked sitting alone quietly in my room idling away the hours doing art, I secretly pined for the pleasure and value of relating to other boys out-of-doors in the open air. But I knew that I was fruitlessly longing for what was impossible. I was well aware that the aggressive and fiercely competitive spirit of group sports was a contributing factor in my decision to spend so much time inside alone doing art. Besides, running counter to the so-called feminine, inward, self-expressive aspects of artistic activity with which I was comfortable, the so-called masculine, outgoing, aggressive competitiveness of team play was alarming to my mostly shy, sensitive, and introverted personality. I panicked whenever I was in situations where my undeveloped athletic ability was about to be exposed. The mere thought of going to gym class made me wretchedly ill.

To make matters worse, certain macho-oriented male classmates were already cruelly and insensitively taunting me for being shy, easily intimidated, insecure, and not displaying the swagger and build of an athlete. And if it wasn't enough for me to feel rejected by them, I had to endure the humiliation of being called degrading names like faggot, sissy, and queer by boys who believed that men who did art, who drew, painted, danced ballet, sang opera, and wrote poetry, weren't "normal" men. I hated the injustice and the unfairness of what I had to go through from day to day; yet it seemed like there was nothing I could do nothing about it.

I didn't realize that nothing truthful or integrative was to be gained by my choosing to retreat indoors and use artistic activity to avoid confronting and coming to terms with the fears, self-doubt, anger and insecurity I was experiencing. Ill effects could only ensue. There was always the chance that I might become chronically anxious and develop agoraphobia: the fear of going outdoors, panicking in public places, and being separated from the security of the indoors (DeCrow and Seidenberg, 1983). Fortunately, in time I was able to face the anger and resentment aroused by what I perceived as the injustice being done to me and turn my outrage into something more positive and beneficial.

The artist's rebellious passion in seeing life and nature in new and fresh ways became my inspiration, and I vowed to become an artist. My lifelong goal was to develop my artistic skills and expressive powers and make significant contributions with my art for the betterment of mankind. In true rebellious spirit, I wanted to help bring about the necessary changes in the atti-
tudes, emotions, and outlook of society in general and insensitive macho-oriented males in particular. Aside from wanting to encourage other males like myself, I was honestly concerned for the mental and emotional development of men who choose to deny their sensitive, nonviolent inner expressive nature. I came to realize that, in disowning this aspect of themselves, they were actually deceiving themselves about who they totally are and allowing their consciousness to be corrupted as a result.

It seems reasonable to assume that as long as there are macho-oriented males who secretly fear that they might have a tendency to become homosexual and mistakenly identify stereotyped homosexual effeminacy with what is known symbolically as the feminine components of personality structure and mentality -- sensitive awareness, feeling-toned intuition, passivity, nonaggressiveness, and nonviolence--they will not be open to such feminine qualities in themselves or to men who choose to express them through art. They will continue to take bodily, self-protective stances against femininity in men and deride and outlaw homosexuality. Until men in general are ready to integrate and balance the masculine components of logic, cool rationality, conceptual understanding, violence, and aggressiveness with feminine traits, they will not become fully functioning, reasonable, "mentally androgynous" whole persons with the clarity and openness of response necessary for contemplating aesthetic, evolutionary and transforming visions of nature, life, and society (Wilbur, 1981).

Without such an androgynous balance in society, the social structure will continue to be masculine, repressive, and unaesthetic in character. Art works will primarily be valued as financial investments and technical feats and used as pleasant diversions, decoration, catharsis, and builders of group morale. Feminine body-bound cognition and urges will retain their low status and continue to be denied access to the mental realms of free socio-cultural communication and understanding (Wilbur, 1981).

The workplace of competition, the marketplace, will remain the dominant forum for male ego exchange, and making a living in the marketplace will be expected and necessary for all men, if not so for women.

Ironically, it was this societal masculine imperative of making a living that prompted me to realize I would never make it as a professional artist. I knew that with my shyness and particular sensibilities I would never be able to play the competitive game in the art marketplace. Besides, I couldn't run the risk of corrupting my art in order to guarantee the selling of it. For me, any attempts through my art to protest and raise society's consciousness about societal intimidation, stereotyping, and oppression had to ring true. I became an art teacher instead.

Art education seemed a more suitable arena for me in which to combine making a living with working at my lifelong social goal of bettering mankind. The classroom put me in direct and immediate contact with the persons whose emotions, attitudes, and outlook I wanted to help transform. It became a stage on which I could make visible and audible the feminine, immediately sensuous qualities of experience I believed was the students' business to face rather than shirk. In this enclosed art education setting I could become an actor, singer, and dancer and be the embodiment of the aesthetic visions of life and society I wanted to express had I become an artist.

But, it wasn't long before I realized that the aesthetic visions of life and society I was expressing...
before the students, as visions, were not life and society themselves as lived outside the classroom. I wanted to go out of doors to the streets to openly, honestly, and directly create with friends and strangers the aesthetic life I always secretly wanted for myself and my fellow human beings. In the manner of performance artists and other post modern avant-gardists I wanted to be out in public with students and show them and people passing by new, refreshing, and revitalizing immediately sensuous ways of interacting with one another and making life an artistic and aesthetic event. I was eager for people to see that they do not have to always settle for that which makes society oppressive, banal, conformist, stereotyped, and stagnant.

My eagerness and enthusiasm, however, were not always enough to get me and the students to the streets with my revitalizing visions and innovative teaching approaches. I soon learned that, unlike the street artist, art teachers have something to lose when straying too far from the mainstream Western art-historical tradition and conventional art teaching practices: their jobs. It was clear to me that job security is won by staying in the classroom and confining one’s teaching to art that is created in studios and exhibited in galleries and museums. However, adhering only to art that maintains the safe boundaries between art, life, and society keeps the feminine, immediately sensuous visions of life embodied in works of art from breaking through and becoming the full body of life itself. The chances are lessened of students getting to live artfully in their day-to-day interactions with the world.

Of course, students are free to bring aesthetic visions to life on their own when they are out in nature and entering into private, quiet and restrained inner aesthetic dialogues with nature's colors, textures, movements, shapes, and spaces. They are not as free, however, to make any open and outgoing displays of spontaneous vocal sounding and expressive body movements in response to nature's sensuous offerings. They are well aware of what people's reactions would be. They also know the possible consequences if they were to try to interact with persons out on the street for no purpose other than to have an aesthetic, intuitive give and take with them. People might think that they were being sexually accosted, that their private and personal spaces were being violated.

Society is not yet ready or willing to permit its members (male members in particular) to relate to one another freely and openly out in public in ways resembling the kind of close sensuous harmonious interacting reserved for theatres, opera houses, concert and dance halls, night clubs, churches, and street festivals. While certain self-actualized mentally androgynous individuals might welcome such public relating, people in general would resist it. Their unconscious fears of losing themselves to the overpowering nature of sensuous feelings would contribute to their being embarrassed and thinking it immoral, weird, and narcissistically regressive to approach strangers on the street and experience their presences in an open, mutual, quiet and tender, free and easy dance-like exchange of body movements. The thought of strangers, or even friends, letting go, acknowledging, and becoming familiar with one another in a simultaneous, nonpurposeful, choral or operalike embracing of one another's voices would arouse their vulnerability to such states of closeness and, paradoxically, petrify them. Besides, it
would be unrealistic to expect people to suddenly put aside society’s whole system of movements, gestures, and responses which facilitate civility in public and give order to an impersonal exchange between strangers and behave as if they hadn’t learned it.

Nevertheless, even if the time is not yet ripe for students to go out of doors to experience and creatively explore aesthetic exchanges with persons out on the street, it is important that they have the opportunity at least to relate aesthetically to one another indoors, in the private, objective, yet no less threatening space of the classroom. I was determined to give them that opportunity. Whether or not I kept this or that particular teaching position didn’t matter to me. What did matter was for students to know how they themselves would react to aesthetically approaching or being approached by other classmates -- whether or not they would be able to let go of themselves and allow the sensuous and expressive qualities of their hands, arms, legs, and voices to burst forth unrestrainedly and be exposed in front of students.

Students need to understand how their behaviors, thoughts, and feelings have been molded and conditioned by the force of cultural and historical contingencies, and how such conditioning could be the reason for any unwillingness on their part to participate in any explorations of aesthetic awareness. It would help both male and female students to become aware of whether or not their responses and reactions tend to be more or less loaded with the stereotypical attitudes of their particular sex. If they find them to be less loaded, it could mean that they are displaying a development toward an androgynous integration and balance and are on their way to allowing both masculine and feminine mentality traits to become a part of their consciousness (Wilber, 1981). Males would become less male, and females less female. They would not let themselves be locked into the state of present-day humanity’s masculine-adapted mentality into consciousness. They would be willing to go beyond the historical equating of body with femininity and mind with masculinity and see that mind can be both masculine and feminine at the same time.

Because the mind developmentally differentiates itself from the body and then suppresses it because of the threat it poses to the mind’s development does not mean that feminine mentality traits are out to destroy the masculine mental realms of symbolic thought, verbal communication, culture, and ego (Wilber, 1981). Femininity does not have to be a threat to masculinity. The mind can choose to become an integral part of it and to let masculinity and femininity traits unite into a new, more advanced mode of consciousness, one that is aesthetically androgynous. In like manner, aesthetic relating can be viewed as a natural, authentic, and developmentally advanced moral form of social interaction going beyond ordinary mental-egoic, verbal and symbolic exchanges between persons. It does not have to be thought of as unmanly for men, immoral, or an uninhibited egocentric reverting to childhood practices.

For students who no longer desire to resist or repress the emergence of the basic structures of femininity consciousness and are willing to let go of their egos and participate in activities which allow for the soaring of these structures, there is the possibility that as their egos are surrendered the suppressed immediately sensuous structures of bodily being will also surface into awareness and give the students a chance to get in touch with them. The hold the social (superego) conditioning has on
control over whether or not interested students would follow through on their own after the semester was over and do what needs to be done to further develop their potential for becoming the aesthetically androgynous individual with the strength and confidence necessary for dealing with life's harshness and absurdities. The choice was totally theirs, as always. My responsibility was to my own self-development and for the choices I made throughout my life and my teaching career.

As it turned out, the choice I made to give students the chance to participate in activities which allow for the soaring of bodily, immediately sensuous energies and the emergence of an aesthetic consciousness was my undoing. It ended my career long before I thought it would. There came a time when another teaching job was not there for me after the loss of the last one.

I was never truly able to be the self-confident, outgoing, whole-bodied individual when dealing with conservative department chairmen and other law-and-order professional colleagues. It was only in the classroom with students that I could be that person. My habit of retreating indoors to the feminine preserve to avoid the threat of masculine egos was a habit I never broke.

References


Duke Madenfort writes about art education from Greenboro, North Carolina.
Culture Change:
The Work of C.A. Bowers in Educational Policy

Nancy R. Johnson

C.A. Bowers has proposed a perspective on educational theory and practice involving cultural literacy and communicative competence. Bowers' proposal addresses culture change through a critical examination of activities in the school curriculum. An overview of this perspective and its possible use in art education is presented.

This paper will sketch out C.A. Bowers' views on educational policy, and discuss some implications for art education. Bowers is challenging the foundations of Cartesian thinking which holds individualism and rational thinking to be superior forms of acting and knowing in the world. Cartesian thinking is a deeply embedded feature of twentieth century American culture. Are art teachers sensitive to the embedded features of culture and the intellectual schemata given by language? Bowers' views are particularly relevant in revealing the intellectual schemata imbedded in art teachers' transmission of conceptual frameworks for understanding the visual arts to children in schools.

The Concept of Culture

Central to an understanding of Bowers' perspective is a concept of culture. Most of us have grown up with the idea that reality is objective, but it is also subjective, and in part, the manufacture of human beings. Distinguishing between those objects and phenomena that are given in the world by nature and those that are created by human beings is problematic. In our conception of reality as objective, the artifacts of human action such as houses, cars, and printed words on paper are most often perceived with the same status as natural phenomena. Human beings make interpretations of nature and create symbolic systems about reality and material objects that are as real as objects in nature.

Some concise ways to comprehend culture have been provided by the anthropologists Robert Barrett (1984) and Alan Beals (1979). Barrett notes that human beings live with symbolic and conventional understandings which they acquire through observation, imitation, and instruction. From the moment of birth, babies are given family and historical human practices that have been developed over many generations. These practices become habitual and taken-for-granted guides for behaving appropriately in society. This process of acquiring and assimilating the cultural messages or patterns of action and thought handed on by parents and adults is called enculturation. Each individual, however, interprets and acts upon the generalized program of thought and action provided by culture in different ways.

Beals states that humans live in cultural systems. These are plans for living made up of traditions, an environment, members, material culture, and a set of maintenance processes. The system operates through cultural transmission wherein ways of proper behavior and the expectations of others are taught and learned. The transmission of culture is life-long and is different in each culture. Within each cultural system, the messages transmitted to members may not be
messages can occur among families of different socioeconomic status, differences in the birth order of siblings, and differences between daughters and sons. Also, a culture usually provides and transmits alternative patterns of action from which one may choose personal preferences for acting in the world. A consequence of the transmission process is that the child as adult will transmit the cultural message to the next generation.

Bowers has utilized the sociology of knowledge perspective of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) and Alfred Schutz (1970) to deal with the phenomenon of culture, social patterns of thought, and the socialization process by which the young learn the conceptual patterns and maps provided by their culture. This perspective is compatible with Barrett's and Beals'. Berger and Luckmann and Schutz provide insights about the ways by which socially constructed realities come to structure our action in the world and the ways by which we come to participate in them. An important point that they make is that humans are not finished or completed at birth as are animals. Through social interaction with others, the child acquires and internalizes socially accepted patterns of action, a language bearing culturally laden and thus political meanings, and structures for thinking about experience derived from the collective distillation of others' past experiences.

**Relationship of Culture and Society to the Individual**

A concept needed for understanding Bowers' perspective is that of the individual. This concept can be easily confused with individualism. As the recipients of Judeo-Christian, Enlightenment, and Frontier traditions, Americans place great value on being your own person and carving out a unique niche in the social fabric of society. Consequently, we tend to forget, or not recognize at all, that our knowledge and actions have not come about solely through our own individual efforts.

None of us founded NAEA, formulated formalist theories of design, or were part of the community of the Barbizon painters. However, without these actions of our predecessors, we might all be teaching art in different ways. The past actions of other persons have given us a language to communicate our ideas about art, exemplars of imagery, and institutions that bring us together as a community. Upon birth, each of received or had access to these events as part of the cultural tradition. What is important is what each of us does about these events. Do we accept the consequences of our predecessor's actions as irreversible and take them for granted as inevitable or the "correct" solution to our problems? Can we become aware of those aspects of our communal traditions and cultural patterns that are incongruent and dysfunctional in our existential experience when we use the traditions and patterns of thinking and action in the conduct of our daily lives? The concept of individualism as the lone, independent person confronting raw reality does not adequately account for the place of society and culture in our lives. Culture and tradition link individuals together. These patterns and traditions, however, need not be deterministic. We are not puppets jerked about by the strings of culture and community; we can act back upon them. The relationship between individual, society, and culture is dialectical and each works upon the other.

**Culture Change**

A third concept necessary for grasping Bowers' perspective is that
of culture change. Cultures change through natural and human initiated events. A famine or drought or earthquake can have catastrophic impact on a culture. Likewise, a symbolic interpretation of these events can be a major factor in change. The gods may have deserted us because our dwelling-place is full of evil, hence the famine or earthquake. Wars, economic depressions, and political repressions may lead to other kinds of cultural change. For example, in Western European thought the artist's unique vision is highly valued, whereas in contemporary China it is the artist's ability to visualize the glory of the state that is valued. Change may also come about more positively by a good harvest, a new coral reef that forms a harbor, or the budgeting of state monies to support the arts. Some cultures are more responsive to change and adapt to new conditions whereas others may disintegrate and disappear as on-going features of human life.

In the context of Bowers' perspective, the focus here is on culture change taking place through the informed participation of citizens. If a catastrophe happens, the Soviets outstrip us technologically in the space race, or art teachers and art programs are eliminated from the schools, how will these events be interpreted, who has the power to interpret and understand them, and how will all of this impact upon us as a society and as individuals? Will special interest groups such as the Council for Policy Studies in Art Education (membership by invitation only) or the Rockefeller Foundation define these events for us and prescribe our course of action? Will each of us take responsibility for acting upon these events and negotiating them into the course of our collective lives? Is the responsibility for culture change to be the province of others who are experts and know what to do or can a citizen take the power to significantly act upon these phenomena, too?

Implications for Education

Bowers advocates a populace empowered through education for negotiating cultural change and changes in our basic belief system. Bowers' concern about this problem is triggered by the impact of rapid technological change and modernization upon twentieth century cultures. Life in the twentieth century United States has been characterized by an acceleration of change - exemplified by the rapid appearance and disappearance of styles and "isms" in the visual arts - that has left little time to adequately resolve or negotiate events that require considered thought and action by citizens of democracy before the onset of others. The rapid change has resulted in the tearing of the cultural canopy covering our individual lives. Before we have adequately "digested" the images of Abstract Expression, Color Field Painting, or Minimalism, we are exposed to the images of New Realism. What is important is the nature of the patches that we put on the cultural canopy and whether or not we can patch faster than the appearance of the holes. For example, is realism to be in or out? Is imagery to express the artist's mood or to show reality from an analytical perspective? Or, maybe, both? Issues requiring attention in the culture at large, may be the following: Is the concept of progress a viable one in light of limited physical resources? Is acid rain controllable or must the need to work in factories diminish our enjoyment of natural forests and preserves? Can we solve all our problems through the authority claims of Cartesian style rational thinking, the scientific method, and technical know-how? Can citizens
feel empowered to act back on these issues and find ways to do so?

In art education, we might examine the following issues: In the elitist-populist controversy, what would be the impact of losing the elitist traditions? Would eliminating looking at and thinking about art commissioned by the Church, royalty, and work endorsed by New York galleries and museums contribute to a better understanding of art in our lives? Does a populist viewpoint that focuses on popular imagery in the media endorsed by business and marketing interests, as well as folk art and art made by untutored persons, serve as an adequate basis for understanding our relationship to visual images? What do each of these perspectives contribute to our understanding of art that is important, and, why is it important? Is Marxist aesthetic theory liberating, and insightful or is it grounded in taken-for-granted assumptions about art that were useful in the nineteenth century and are, perhaps, not so useful in the late twentieth century? Can DBAE adequately address the problem of whether an understanding of the formal structures of each discipline of artistic knowledge provide empowerment to negotiate art-based cultural traditions and community patterns?

Communicative Competence

In view of the issues of rapid social change, the prevalence of only technological or technical solutions to our problems, and the alteration of basic cultural beliefs, Bowers proposes the formulation of a new theory of education. He states that the primary and appropriate goal of American education is communicative competence. By this, Bowers means an:

individual's ability to negotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others....The unique contributions that public education can make to the student's communicative competence include: (1) providing an understanding of the cultural forces that foster change; (2) providing knowledge of cultural traditions that will enable students to exercise a judgment about those elements of the culture that are worth preserving; and (3) providing a method of thinking that enables students to see decisions in social life in terms of continuities, disconjunctions, and trade-offs (1984, p.2).

In sum, students need to be communicatively competent and culturally literate. They need to be able "to read or decode the taken-for-granted assumptions and conceptual categories that underlie the individual's world of experience" (1984, p.2).

The means by which communicative competence is to be brought about is the curriculum. The curriculum is a major force in the transmission of cultural messages and the enculturation or socialization of students. Bowers has proposed that three principles to be considered for the development of a curriculum which will achieve some distance from the students' taken-for-granted conceptions acquired during socialization and provide some psychologically safe place for examining them.

First Principle: Utilizing Students' Phenomenological Culture

Bowers states that a first step in examining cultural patterns is to study the students' own personal or phenomenological experience. One approach would be to keep a diary of one's encounters with the theme or topic to be studied such as the role of artist, art historian, or art critic. Another is to interview persons who have had experience with
the topic and find out what their personal phenomenological experience has been and comparing it with one's own.

Second Principle: Use of Historical Perspective to De-objectify Knowledge

A next step in the examination of cultural patterns is to study the social origins of a topic and find out how the topic began and has been transformed over time. One might engage in some library research or cross-generational inquiry. For example, how do one's grandparents, parents, and siblings view the concept of work or art? Do other cultures define and interpret concepts in the same way as Americans or the Nigerians view these concepts? What makes art easy and can anyone claim to be an artist?

Third Principle: Incorporating A Cross-Cultural Perspective

A third step in examining cultural knowledge is to study how other cultures define and interpret the topic at hand. How do Native Americans and the Amish view the concept of work and art? Do the Chinese or the Nigerians view these concepts in the same way as Americans?

Investigations along these lines problemize a person's internalized cultural categories, thus throwing them into relief. At that point, the cultural and social knowledge one has acquired can be recognized, talked about, and consciously negotiated in terms of finding where it might be dysfunctional, and deciding to continue to carry this knowledge as is, to forget it, or to alter it through active social intervention in some way.

An important figure in the transmission of cultural and social knowledge via the curriculum is the teacher. To implement Bowers' proposal, teachers as gatekeepers or knowledge brokers, who control both the frameworks and the content one learns about social knowledge, will need to become familiar with the sociology of knowledge themselves. They will need to exercise communicative competence in terms of sensitivity to the preservation of meaningful traditions and patterns, the embeddedness of concepts internalized during their own socialization, and the ability to illuminate taken-for-granted beliefs and practices.

Communicative Competence and Art Education

The visual arts can contribute to the students' communicative competence. Cultural traditions and forces can be examined through art forms using Bowers' three principles. The social realities created by human beings and aspects of them are visible in the images found in art works. Art works are part of the material culture of a society and reflect the interests and thinking of their makers as culture carriers and cultural participants. Comparing and contrasting the imagery, style, and media of the visual arts found in students' phenomenological experience, in history, and in other cultures is an excellent way to illuminate our assumptions and conceptual categories.

Bowers' proposal also has implications for teaching about art. For example, at the elementary level, children could investigate their conceptions of art and artists. They could ask parents about their concepts. Artists could be invited to class to share their work and discuss their views on what they do. Information about how images are made in other societies, and for what purposes, might be gathered through some library work or looking at and discussing actual images. Through discussion, the cultural categories referring to artists and their work would be illuminated and open to discussion. Points to ponder might be: What do artists do? Why do they make art? What kinds of art and images do they make? What stereotypes exist about artists? Is making art easy and can anyone claim to be an artist?
At the secondary level, students could investigate how art functions in their lives and the society at large. Phenomenological, historical, and cross-cultural investigations that examine how art functions in society would all yield points for discussion and further inquiry. The richness of art history, art criticism, art theories, and the development of art forms and media could become both the topics of inquiry and the sources for knowledge. Points to ponder could become more complex. Students might consider why rational or scientific knowledge is valued more highly than the kinds of knowledge that artists use in making images and also the knowledge found in the images that artists make. They might inquire about why certain imagery is valued and others are not at a given time or over time, and examine the implications of a relativistic point of view which holds that art is anything you want it to be.

Using Bowers' proposal, art teachers and their students would be able to examine in a thorough manner, the foundational concepts underlying theory and practice in the visual arts. One might even tackle the concept that one should not talk about art but just look at it!

References


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Book Reviews

Jack A. Hobbs

ART IN CONTEXT


Art in Context has many of the qualities needed for a stimulating and practical high school or university text. Jack Hobbs' writing is free of pretentious jargon and dry pedantry. His book includes an adequate index and a 16 page glossary, and each chapter is supplemented with suggestions for further reading. Like Albert E. Elsen's Purposes of Art ([1962] 1972), Art in Context does not shackle itself with a strict chronological format, and instead presents themes separately, meandering back and forth in time throughout the first two of the book's three sections. A chronological approach is then used in section three, which surveys 20th century art, venturing as far as Conceptualism and Neo-Expressionism, with a tentative peek at post-modernism. Hobbs also includes helpful charts that list chronologically all of the book's many illustrations.

Hobbs has contextualized art in three general ways: section one deals with the "Perceptual Context," section two with the "Human Context," and section three with the "Historical Context." Members of the Social Theory Caucus--some of whom are acknowledged by Hobbs in the book's preface--will want to ask: what about the social context? Although Hobbs in no way ignores it, he discusses it irregularly and as a secondary focus. While some people will be unsatisfied with this approach, others will find Hobbs' wide view to be refreshing.

Unlike Lanier (1987), Hobbs does not see contextualization as being in opposition to formalism. In the book's first section, Hobbs depicts one of art's contexts as being the relationship between "the visual elements." For example, colours in any painting "are part of a context" (p.22). But the notion of the visual elements is, itself, never adequately placed within its own historical context. Hobbs states the "Artists of all sorts," and, by implication, from all eras, "...are always basically concerned with the visual elements" (p.15). Yet the popularization of formalism as the fundamental basis for art is a product of the modernist era, a fact not analyzed in Hobbs' book. Also unanalyzed is the role of strict formalism in diverting the perceiver's attention away from art's social context.

Later in the book's first section, Hobbs does allude to the social context of some forms of architecture, such as the function of balloon frame wooden house construction during America's rapid development (p.86). But he neglects social aspects of other architectural examples. He tells us about the large, flowing Japanese house, concentrating on how its design suits the Japanese's psychological notions of entry into "the peace and harmony of the inside" (pp.109-110). Yet broader social questions--such as what percent of Japan's crowded population enjoy the spacious accommodations Hobbs described--are not addressed.

The book's second section contains a discussion of four artists, which, while instructive, tends to romantically present the
artist as a hero struggling against the Philistines. This section also has chapters on "Images of Nature," "Men and Women," and "Images of America." The latter chapter mentions art's relationship to urbanization, social class values, and cultural minorities. The chapter on the sexes is frank, but with a heterosexual bias. While Hobbs investigates sexuality as it pertains to the female nude to the male nude painted by women, and to art works depicting men and women together, he fails to acknowledge the beauty and values that homosexual sensitivity has endeavored to convey. This failure is especially apparent in his treatment of the male nude during the Classical Greek and Renaissance periods. There is also a failure to strongly critique the depiction of women as sex objects for men (pp.155), 158-159, 163-164), and as Eves, Delilahs, and Pandoras perpetrating the world's evils.

Of course, any book can be easily criticized for what it fails to contain. Here such criticism must be balanced with mention of the many enriching insights that Art in Context does provide. Hobbs' strength is not in primary historical research; the book exhibits very little of that. Rather, he carefully synthesizes secondary research in a provocative yet sensitive manner. He allows no chapter to slip in unfinished. His interpretations achieve adequate depth without barraging us with extraneous facts. He is also a master at choosing just the right art work to exemplify his point, and he skillfully draws us back to certain works to illustrate different ideas throughout the book. Hobbs' economy and readability lend themselves to a text for students who have little patience with wading through trivia before arriving at germane concepts.

Conservatives will stick with Janson ([1962] 1969), while Marxists and feminists will continue their search for a more ideologically correct text. But many others will find Art in Context to be an intelligent, carefully conceived, broadly scoped, well packaged alternative approach to art history and criticism. In the context of today's art education, such alternatives are indeed welcome.

References


Donald Soucy, University of New Brunswick
Gene Mittler
ART IN FOCUS


In the past two decades researchers and practitioners in the field, and more recently the Getty Institute, have developed the emerging concept of discipline-based art education (DBAE). In structuring the book Art In Focus around art criticism, art history, and studio, Gene Mittler attempts to incorporate three of the widely accepted components of the DBAE paradigm into a single work. Mittler does not directly include the generally acknowledged fourth component of aesthetics in his work, although the concept of aesthetic consciousness on the parts of the artist and the viewer is implied throughout the book.

The book is divided into two major sections. The first section consists of three critical chapters which establish the foundation for the rest of the book.

The first chapter states the purpose of the book and how it should be used. Mittler contends that the purpose of the book is to expand the readers' understanding of art and ultimately their capacity to express themselves in art whether by the creation of visual images or by making personal decisions and judgments about artworks. Since Art In Focus is designed as an interactive matrix of activities in criticism, history and studio, one is well advised to follow the author's suggested methodology as outlined in this first chapter.

The second chapter provides a thorough review of the elements and principles of art which Mittler characterizes as the "visual vocabulary." The presentation of this basic material is done with economy and precision.

The third chapter is probably the most relevant part of the book for the art educator. In this chapter Mittler identifies and compares the basic methodologies employed by the art critic and the art historian. These distinct methods and their respective operations serve as models in the study periods of art history in the subsequent chapters of the second section.

Mittler contends that the methodology of both the critic and the historian can be grounded in the four basic operations of description, analysis, interpretation and judgment. The idea of the art critic using these operations is certainly not new. Feldman and others have developed this model for pedagogical art criticism. Mittler proposes to relate these same steps to the methods employed by the art historian. He states that the art historian uses the operation of description as a process of discovering factual information about the artwork, such as when and where it was created. According to Mittler the operation of analysis for the art historian relates to the unique features comprising the work's artistic style, while the operation of interpretation focuses on the influence of external events and conditions as they affect the artist and the work. Judgment would center on the importance of the artwork in the history of art.

The author maintains that in order to understand a work fully, the student should employ both criticism and history. He states the art historical method enables one to learn more about a work from an external standpoint. By compari-
In addition, chapter three has a strong section on art theories and aesthetic qualities. For the student unfamiliar with art theory, the section serves as a basic introduction. Mittler effectively relates these theories to the process of criticism.

The second section of the text, comprising three quarters of the content, primarily surveys major works of art in a standard historical chronology beginning with prehistoric art. Each chapter in this section provides a general narrative focused on the artists and art of the period under review. With only a few exceptions the works selected for study appear in practically all general art history textbooks.

The chapters in this second section of Art In Focus are written in clear and concise language. The book can be read by a broad range of students at the secondary and college levels.

Along with the narrative, Mittler places within each chapter color coded sections that contain art history and criticism questions related to the works under investigation. The reader is first advised to study the illustrations and the questions contained within the captions as a means of sharpening personal skills in criticism and art history. Upon completion of this process one is instructed to read the main body of the chapter. In essence, the reader is encouraged to respond initially to the art at a systematic, yet personal level, then proceed to acquire insight from the text. If in fact this process is followed, an innovative approach inviting personal response and interaction can occur, rather than a passive acceptance too frequently associated with many introductory art courses.

Each chapter in section two ends with several suggested studio experiences supposedly related to the previously studied period. While many of these activities do effectively relate to the periods covered, in several instances it is difficult to see clear correlations. Also, several of the suggested studio experiences, such as the creation of a mosaic wall plaque from ceramic tesserae in conjunction with the study of Byzantine art, are rather ambitious given the normal time restraints of the typical art class.

A weakness in these chapters that examine the periods of art history is the periodic failure to relate the artworks to a broader view of culture and social concerns. This observation is based on the assumption that art does reflect the values and concerns of the society in which it is created. Mittler's examination of Greek art illustrates this weakness. Throughout the chapter there is direct reference made to key concepts underlying Greek art, such as humanism, Platonic thought, and the Golden Section. Similar observations can be made in other areas, such as the discussion of nineteenth century movement of Realism without reference to the impact of the emerging philosophy of Positivism. In short, many of the art periods covered could be strengthened by referencing them to a more comprehensive social and historical context.

Art In Focus is based almost entirely on the Western art tradition. As a postscript a brief chapter on the art of non-Western cultures is provided at the end of
the text. Rather than placing this material at the conclusion, a more effective format would have been to incorporate it within the chronology of the art periods. As an example, the wonderful illustration of the cast bronze sculptures from the Benin culture of Nigeria would have had greater impact if presented in one of the sections related to ancient art.

Nevertheless, *Art In Focus* sensitively addresses the contributions of minorities and women to the development of Western art. With the introduction of Sofonisba Anguissola, a highly competent portrait artist of the Renaissance, Mittler provides consistent examples of accomplished women artists. The same can be said for his treatment of Afro-American artists, such as Tanner and Bannister, to cite only two.

Another notable section deals with the Mexican Mural Group. The author examines the work of such notable artists as Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros. Also, the impact of these Mexican artists on the development of art in the United States is effectively covered.

The overall design and format of the book is sound. Ample illustrations of good quality are provided with a substantial number of color plates interspersed in the text. The author has provided several features that are especially helpful to the teacher using the textbook. In section two a listing of artists with brief biographical data is provided at the first of each chapter. A phonetic breakdown for the pronunciation of artists' names is also beneficial. The appendices contain a series of criticism and history experiences for each chapter that will be valuable for the instructor, followed by a section of art-related careers and a glossary of terms. A complete bibliography arranged by chapters, plus a chart of periods, styles and artists should also be useful.

An individual considering the adoption of the book for classroom use may have questions concerning the intended audience. In some instances it could be used as an art textbook at the secondary level, provided the course is an in-depth study. *Art In Focus* can also serve as an effective introductory art text at the freshman and sophomore college levels. Indeed, it provides a viable alternative to several current art appreciation textbooks such as *Artforms* and *Living With Art*.

In conclusion, *Art In Focus* is appropriate as a resource text for the instructor at the secondary or college level. It can function as an effective primary or supplementary text for courses directed toward the preparation and training of art teachers. *Art In Focus* should be in the professional library of art teachers who are interested in current curriculum developments in the field of art education.

Patrick Taylor, Kennesaw College
Betty LaDuke
COMPANERAS: WOMEN, ART, AND
SOCIAL CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA


The term Companeras translates into English as companions or comrades. Betty LaDuke keeps some intriguing ones in her journey through the tumultuous regions of Latin America. Reading her account of her search for the art and artists of the fourteen countries through which she leads her reader is rather like having one's face washed with the six o'clock news. The names and the places are all painfully familiar, but the slant is new. Instead of claims for military hardware and pleas for more millions to pour into the coffers of war, the reader is exposed to the personal stories and recent works of the quiet but passionate women artists who work behind the international spotlight in both urban and rural settings during a period of rapid political and economic change. LaDuke covers a gamut of ancient traditional crafts handed down through generations and sidling up to university-educated trends of professional modern artists.

Betty LaDuke is neither an anthropologist nor an art historian, but rather a teacher and a working artist, whose personal style and content are both directly affected by her companeras. She was stimulated by her students' reactions to her "Women and Art" class at Southern Oregon State College, but dismayed at the limitations of available literature and slides, so she sought examples of women's art to expand her course of offerings. Gifts of Latin American women's art sent her on the particular treasure hunt she recounts for us here. Her format is that of an anthology of stories about the artists, their media, and the circumstances in which they live and to which they react through their art.

It is her view that tourists from so-called "plastic" Western societies travel to these third world nations in search of the beauty and endurance of traditional art forms. This creates a demand for the skills to continue to be handed on to new generations, which keeps those skills alive and not only enduring, but also changing and updating in response to the current needs of the society and the economy they buttress. Ancient crafts are adapted to new functions; intricately woven bags that once carried tortillas now hold schoolbooks or tourists' belongings. Through the creation of these crafts the women can express pride in their Indian and black African heritages and develop self-sufficiency for their families through the income they earn.

Among the painters interviewed, a common characteristic regardless of style is a strong emphasis on the figure. Some of the painters have professional training, others have no formal education. Most have child care and homemaking responsibilities; many hold jobs unrelated to their art although those with formal training frequently are teachers. Pervasive themes the women artists subscribe to include: gender, sexuality, motherhood, and the life cycle. Approaches range from critical social commentary to the recording of common experiences affecting all female populations. Paintings, murals, posters: according to LaDuke each form of expression is designed by these women
artists to strengthen the world all our children will inherit.

The artists of many primitive Latin American countries are nearly all women who are finding new strength through organization. Churches, unions and workshops are helping them to learn marketing strategies and to gain control of the profits from their sales. International human rights and solidarity groups also help. Women are finally finding university faculty positions opening up to them more frequently and as they gain representation they also gain visibility. The author states that this presence continues outside academe into the world community of galleries and museums. Opportunities continue to expand as the impact of the women's ideas and messages is felt, and even as the outstanding quality of their work gains them respectability.

The lives of the companeras revolve around their art on a daily basis. They display a fierce tenacity of priorities and an honorable courage to even be able to produce it, considering the other demands on their energies that relate directly to survival. As life endures, their art endures. As the living changes, so the art changes and we all grow. Perhaps the six o'clock news will take on a new dimension with this growth.

Helane Horner, Gadsden County Schools, Florida
Carol Gilligan
IN A DIFFERENT VOICE:
PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY AND WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982. Hardback or paperback; 184
pages; $5.95.

Carol Gilligan, Associate Professor of Education in the
Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, has written an
important book dealing with female moral development. She believes
that women's life views have been misunderstood because of psycholo-

gy's persistent view of female thought and action vis-a-vis the
male model of moral development. Human developmental theories had
been built on observations of males until Gilligan's book focused
attention on females' psychological growth pattern as being greatly
different.

Gilligan proposed that there are
two different modes of thought
about moral issues - male and
female. The different voice she
describes is characterized by the
themes of separation and attachment.
The association is not absolutely
tied to gender, although in our
society separation tends to be
viewed as masculine and attachment
as feminine. She suggests that male
gender identity is threatened by
intimacy, often causing males to
have difficulties with relations-
ships. On the other hand, feminini-
ty is defined through attachment,
causning females to have problems
with individuality.

Gilligan's research focus lies
in the interaction of experience and
thought and is based on the central
assumption: "That the way people
talk about their lives is of signifi-
cance, that the language they use
and the connections they make reveal
the world that they see and in which
they act" (p.2). Her book is based
on three studies she conducted
dealing with the same questions
about concepts of self and morality,
and about experiences of conflict
and choice. Her research points out
that people have become so accus-
tomed to viewing the world through
men's eyes that they do not recog-
nize the lens through which they
gaze, nor do they see the distor-
tions caused by a singular, male
point of view. Hence, for example,
the female's focus on interconne-
tions rather than separation has
been defined as failure to develop.

Sensitivity and caring about feel-
ings has been construed as weakness
rather than strength. Gilligan's
point is that women have a different
moral understanding than men and
that they have a more contextual
mode of understanding. Thus, they
bring to the life cycle a different
point of view and have a different
set of priorities in the ordering of
human experience.

As with other life arenas, art
has been viewed predominantly
through the male lens. Just as
Gilligan pointed out there are two
modes (male and female) that need
recognition in the world of art.
Women artists' contributions through-
out history have been largely
ignored. Serious art has been
viewed as a part of the man's world
and women's hiddenstream art as
merely handicraft or hobby art.
Although recently we have begun to
see a change in attitudes toward
female artists and their work, in
textbooks the ratio of male to
female artists, art historians, art
批评s, and aestheticians still
indicates the bias. The questions
arise: Who created art?; Who
selected the artists who are considered masters?; Who benefited from the process?; and Why are women not represented? Gilligan would suggest that the dominant male world view has affected artistic choices and continues, in subtle ways, to shape how aesthetic quality is defined. She offers the possibility of equitable changes by a societal shift in acceptance of not only man's, but also woman's moral values. Art can serve the human need of making connections between other and self by being a means of expressing the different voice.

Beverly Wilson, Louisiana State University
Edmund Burke Feldman

THINKING ABOUT ART


For the student of art or an art "civilian" Thinking About Art by Edmund Burke Feldman offers an opportunity to expand one's appreciation of art visually and intellectually. The author's three main purposes for the book: "to stimulate thought about art, to encourage discussion about artistic ideas and to give pleasure" are truly fulfilled in this reader.

The book begins with a discussion of the "Importance of Art." Here, one finds the thesis of the book that "art is important because it expresses meanings and because it creates effects and causes results". Thinking About Art then proceeds to explain the ways in which the visual arts can do this.

In order to understand art today and yesterday, Feldman knows that a lot of groundwork must be done. The "Importance of Art," the first chapter, discusses "What is Art?", "Who Creates Art?", and "What Are the Uses of Art?". Although these seem to be ordinary questions, Feldman does an extraordinary job of laying down interesting answers, particularly in his discussion of "Who Creates Art," discussing such types as the well known artists and their teams to the anonymous craftsmen, their identities lost to us while their achievements remain to inspire; the magicians and sorcerers, possibly the first artists; and ending with the advent of machines and technology that have shared in the process of artmaking since the Industrial Revolution. In a section on the uses of art, Feldman explains the possibilities of moral, religious, political and aesthetic reasons and uses for creating art. He chooses superb examples of artwork created by artists making powerful visual statements concerning human issues.

The second chapter, "The Language of Art," provides the reader with the vocabulary and understanding to talk about, think about and enjoy art. "How Does Art Speak?" discusses the elements and principles of design. What could be dry stuff comes alive because of Feldman's style. He refers to art we know in unique ways, for example this discussion of Cezanne and Van Gogh. "For their ability to create feelings of unity and coherence we can be grateful to two modern painters: Cezanne, obsessed with finding order in a mountain he painted again and again; and Vincent van Gogh, discovering the painful harmony of the universe in a pair of sunflowers."

Before we get any further, let me mention that the color reprints used throughout the book are of the finest quality, on a smooth, substantial weight paper offering the reader a treasure of intriguing images, many of which are not common examples of artists' work. Each carefully chosen reproduction is accompanied by an explanatory paragraph that gives the reader additional insight supplementing the main text of the book. As I turned each page I found myself looking forward to both of these learning devices.

Chapter three, "Ancient and Medieval Art," chapter four, "Renaissance and Baroque Art," and chapter five, "The Modern World" use about one third of the book to give us the historical spectrum of western art. While art history is sequential, Feldman reminds us that in its evolution, art consists of many streams of development feeding into
each other, intersecting, running parallel, or going underground and coming up as springs in unexpected places. He also reminds us that when Leonardo was painting the Madonna and St. Anne (1510 A.D.) about the same time an Aztec sculptor was carving The Goddess Tiazolteotl Giving Birth to Centeotl, God of Corn, pointing out how artistic activity goes on continuously throughout the world. These chapters on the history of art outline major artists, movements and styles, clearly describing how religion, politics, economics, the ruling class and the human condition influenced and/or controlled the artistic endeavors. Again, I found in the text, revealing aspects and perspectives on art history. In each period Feldman discusses whatever art form was prevalent or outstanding at the time and what influences were involved, as well as cultural context and cross-cultural perspective.

The last five chapters deal with individual media and art forms: "Painting," "Sculpture," "Architecture," "The Crafts and Design," "Printmaking, Photography, and Film." In these chapters, Feldman emphasizes critical and aesthetic factors that make each artwork more meaningful and enjoyable. The intention is not to teach a person how to create art but to get more out of an encounter with art. Chapter six, "Painting," for example, goes into all the aspects of this art form, such as "The Paint Itself," "Drawing While Painting," "Enjoying Drawing Alone," "Light," "Color," "Enjoying Color," "Pleasure in Painting: Execution," "Enjoying Space," "Enjoying Form in Space," and "Energy in Painting." These chapters take the reader into the art experience in a way inaccessible to art history. They help the reader to appreciate the uniqueness of each art form, the problems and solutions that artists encounter.

Chapter nine, "The Crafts and Design," discusses a more utilitarian art form which, because of its nature, is intrinsically involved with craftsmanship and design related to function. Here Feldman examines a range of issues focused on the questions of craftsmanship and quality in design. He includes an analysis of bad craft and bad art which he classifies as exhibiting incompleteness, inauthenticity, incongruity and inflation. According to Feldman, any work of art can suffer from these if the artist is insensitive to the "aesthetic signalling" projected through design and craftsmanship. In a section on the pleasure of good design he delineates seven aspects that a well designed object should contain and the pleasure that good design will convey.

The last chapter, "Printmaking, Photography, and Film" deals with these media as art forms as well as examining the relationship between the traditional arts and the modern communication arts. Here, more than anywhere else, he delves into the use of art in expressing social issues. He examines the great printmakers, photographers and filmmakers who used their art to educate the public about social injustices and conditions. The text contains descriptions of the various techniques of printmaking, the issues of originality, and the impact of reproduced art. Woodcuts, wood engravings, intaglios, engravings, etchings, lithography, and silk screen are various methods discussed in creating a print pattern. Photography, film, and television are described as using light to create the print pattern for reproducing images. Discussion of these latest technological developments requires basically the same artistic language as earlier forms and affords more people the opportunity to enjoy and react to such a wide variety of visual arts.
Thinking About Art would make an excellent textbook for many art courses, especially focusing on art appreciation and criticism. It is informative, interesting, and stimulates creative thought and discussion about art. Feldman has revealed to us the power of art to make us truly see, encounter and experience the world.

Laurie Gomon Ring, Volusia County Schools, Florida.
Alan Newberg (Ed.)
BEN STEELE: PRISONER OF WAR

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Alan Newberg has put together an exhibition of eighty drawings and three paintings which showed at the Northcutt Gallery at Eastern Montana College in 1986. The entire collection is the property of Eastern Montana College as the result of a gift from Mr. Steele who is a professor emeritus at that institution. The accompanying catalog features thirty black and white reproductions of the work, an introduction by Newberg and an essay by James Todd, an art history professor at the University of Montana. Also included is a chronology and list of works in the exhibition. The catalog and exhibition chronicle Ben Steele's experience as a prisoner of the Japanese during World War Two.

Newberg's description of the exhibition as representing "...the dark and inhuman things that people do to one another under the cold and tolerant eye of war" (p.1) is a pretty accurate description of the thematic content of the visuals contained in this catalog. These works were not done in Japanese prison camps, since Steele's work done in the camps was destroyed. Rather, these works were done under the auspices of rehabilitation once he was free. Many are reproductions of work done in the camps. Newberg feels that Mr. Steele, whom he sees as a stable and balanced individual, used art to stay sane during internment. Thus we have art in this case not only as social comment but as therapy.

James Todd, in his essay, relates that Steele developed his interest in art in the internment camps, after surviving the Bataan Death March. There are basically two types of drawings in the show, according to Todd, those done as therapy during Steele's recovery, and those done after Steele had received formal training. Todd accurately portrays the former as awkward technically but with the redeeming sense of honesty in reporting. They portray not objectively, but subjectively from Steele's position as a victim, the life experience of being there. The original drawings made in the camps represented a great risk to Steele. If he was caught he would have been punished severely.

The drawings themselves fall into categorical types, the first being the drawings from the therapeutic period which are naturalistic in character, report oriented, and a bit clumsy as one might expect. They are charged, however, with a sort of direct, raw energy. In the second type, done after some professional training, this rawness becomes channelled into expressivist images which have elements of German woodcuts, Daumier, and political cartooning all rolled into one.

The catalog is available from the Eastern Montana College Bookstore, 1500 N. 30th St., Billings, Montana, 59101. The exhibition is available for $500.00. Inquiries should be directed to Alan Newberg, Art Department, Eastern Montana College.

T.A.