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Charles Garoian is Director of the School of Visual Arts and Professor of Art Education at Penn State University. His scholarly articles are featured in theoretical journals on art and education and his book Performing Pedagogy: Toward an Art of Politics (1999) is a publication of the State University of New York Press. A performance artist, he has performed, lectured, and presented workshops nationally and internationally. He and colleague Yvonne Gaudelius co-organized Performative Sites: Intersecting Art, Technology, and the Body, an international symposium, which was held at Penn State in October 2000. The symposium examined the pedagogical implications of performance artists' works that use mechanical and electronic technologies to expose, critique, and intervene in technological culture and its impact on the human body and identity.

Yvonne Gaudelius is Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies and Outreach and an Associate Professor of Art Education and Women Studies whose current research focuses on the ways in which discourses of the body are mediated through various artistic and technological practices. Her writings include the co-edited book Contemporary Issues in Art Education (2002) and articles in journals such as Studies in Education, Journal of Social Theory in Art Education, The Pennsylvania Art Educator, and the Canadian Review of Art Education and chapters in several books.

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Donalyn Heise is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Director for the UNO Center for Innovation in Arts Education. Current research interests include art integration, the role of the arts in a democracy, social perspectives in arts education and art and technology integration. She is the President for the Nebraska Art Teacher's Association (NATA) and serves as representative for the Electronic Media Interest Group of the National Art Education Association, and in 1997 was awarded the NATA Art Supervisor/Administrator of the Year. Dr. Heise has designed, developed and implemented professional development programs nationwide, and K-16 art-based collaborative projects. She coordinated ConferNet, one of the nation's first K-12 academic, art-based virtual conferences, which focused on the art of posters. She designed and maintains ARTnet, an online educational system for arts education, and has been involved with coordinating and developing the content for the Prairie Visions Consortium. She is currently working with Arts4Learning, a national web dissemination project to provide a distributed system for best practices in arts integration. Dr. Heise designed, developed, implemented and evaluated online courses using various delivery systems for Information Media Literacy programs, teacher education programs, and foreign language education in K12 schools. Recent publications include articles in Art Education, Journal of Online Learning, Journal of Social Theory in Art Education, and various arts agency newsletters. Recent exhibitions include 2-D work in the Spiritual III International Juried Exhibition, Period Gallery; and a social action digital sculpture in the UNO Faculty Exhibition, 2001; and the All-Media International Juried Exhibition, 2001, and the J Doe Public Sculpture project.
Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Art Education at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on strategies for teaching critical inquiry and creative approaches with dynamic/interactive technologies. Engaged in feminist methodologies she creates virtual spaces, such as CyberFeminist House, to problematize representation, identity, and display for personal and societal transformative possibilities. Her writings on feminist pedagogy, interpreting visual culture, politics of display, virtual museums, ecofeminist art, community-based art, inclusion practices, cyberart, and uses of technology for multivocal art interpretations have appeared in publications such as *Studies in Art Education*, *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, *Journal of Art Education*, and *Art and Academe*, and as chapters in several books. Her multimedia publication on Judy Chicago’s feminist pedagogy is at <http://www.judychicago.com/pedagogy/>. Her lecture for the Envisioning the Future Lecture Series, *Globalization, Art, and the Future*, at the Pomona Arts Colony, California, is video streamed at <http://www.envisioningthefuture.org/>. She co-edited *Real-World Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told You* (2000, Falmer), served as *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* editor, and is a guest editor for *Visual Arts Research*.

Wanda B. Knight is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at the Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests include visual culture and issues of diversity as related to schools and schooling. Focusing on program evaluation and preparing preservice teachers to teach diverse student populations, she has presented at numerous regional, state, national, and international conferences to include the National Art Education Association, the International Society of Education Through Art and the College Art Association. Her most recent publication (2003), *Using Contemporary Art to Challenge Cultural Values, Beliefs and Assumptions*, invites art educators to critically look at themselves as social beings, while confronting the taken for granted assumptions they hold about the students they teach.

Marjorie Cohee Manifold’s research interests have focused upon the aesthetic experiences and art-making expressions of people from ordinary walks of life. Early investigations looked at the aesthetic responses of women’s grief, the expressions of craftpersons in an urban-Appalachian community, and the aesthetic attitudes and artistic creations of folk artists and craftpersons of a rural midwestern community. Her present studies of youth as artists and creators of culture continue this vein of inquiry. She has published articles on these topics of interest in anthologies and journals, including *Women’s Art Educators* issues IV and V, *Art Education*, and *The Journal of Visual Arts Research*. Before accepting a position as Assistant Professor of Art Education at Indiana University, Bloomington, Dr. Manifold served on the faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond.

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Robert Sweeney is an art educator and PhD student at The Pennsylvania State University. He is currently completing his dissertation, which deals with the relationship between various classroom structures and complex network systems. The main focus of this research is studying and implementing critical approaches in art classrooms based on attributes of the Internet that are used to challenge notions of authorship, the authenticity of the art object, and institutional authority.
Editorial
Silence Under Erasure—
The Silence of Silence

j networking /Bill Wightman

Author Guagliumi’s cover design speaks eloquently to the theme of this year’s journal: silence. The fractal spaces of a complex topological landscape—with various intensities of lines that compress and depress throughout are cut and interpenetrated by blank spaces whose sinuous curves stake out a depthless territory that we know nothing about. The “spine” of the cover becomes an artificial divide where the two sides butt together, as if some giant fault line had been intentionally created. Occasionally a translucent film grows over the force and intensity of these lines, both masking and holding them together to neutralize their force. If the viewer looks carefully, occasionally there is seepage of lines that make their way into the white void. These are interstitial sites where the percipitous “cut” of depthless space softens and there is an overflowing and exchange of boundaries. These are the moments of aleatory events—microscopic and easily overlooked, precisely where transformative change begins through the ever so slight corrosion of time.

Floating above this intense hubris of activity on depthless space are letters—the alphabetization of symbols that are like the non-sense of the unconscious itself. Meaning has not been formed, but exists only as an affective turmoil felt by the body. Like a silent scream that has become iconic of Edvard Munch, these letters are dispersed and
scattered over the intensities and force lines of a landscape that is forming to articulate itself—to find a site/sight/cite so that it might be heard. Munch's deafening scream is echoed once more by Mike Emme's "Visual Editorial" that appears when the reader opens the cover. The paradox of silence is well illustrated by the negative photograph of an organ that mediates the threshold of sound between our inside and outside world—the ear. Its orifice is intentionally held open as if to taunt the limits of what can be heard. The word "silence" remains "visibly inaudible." The visual also presents the paradox of gender as much as it does race—for the reflexivity of silence holds no bounds.

In this year's journal, the essays have demarcated various interstitial sites throughout the art, art education and entertainment media landscape and have begun to chart the silences that exist within it. The first three essays address The Silences of War. The events of post 9/11 and the Bush's controversial "war on terrorism" with its unilateral foreign policy have increased the level of anxiety throughout the United States. Code Orange security alert is a cyclical repetition. Rob Nellis' essay on Ridley Scott's film, Black Hawk Down, raises questions concerning the representation of war that silently haunts the film in the background. At what point does such a film, based on an "actual event" that took place in Mogadishu, Somalia, become a propaganda statement of American heroism rather than raising the political controversy that surrounded the American Marines attempt to assassinate the warlord Mohamed Farrah Aaidid? Nellis's essay raises the political silences that the film refuses to acknowledge. Norm Friesen's "Catching Sight of the Permanent Possibility of War: Images of Totality and Words of Peace" follows up with a discussion of the "visual technologies of war." Here other silences emerge. His essays draws on the ethical work of Emmanuel Levinas and the importance of a phenomenological understanding of an embodied "flesh" bearing eye when it comes to war. In contrast to such a potentially "peaceful

eye," Friesen examines the initiative of the Pentagon's surveillance eye of "homeland security" as represented by their logo developed under the auspices of DARPA, (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency). Friesen ends his essay by examining the images of "semiological guerilla warfare" that have arisen to expose the silences that surround such "security measures." Next, Mary Stokrocki's exploration of Michael Moore's documentary film, Bowling for Columbine, provides an interesting juxtaposition to Friesan's analysis. Michael Moore happens to be the best selling current (2004) author in United States. His views on violence and gun control are well-known. Stockrocki's essay, "Documentary Rhetoric, Fact or Fiction? University Students React to the Film, Bowling for Columbine," attempts to identify some of the silences surrounding Moore's own rhetoric, throwing into question the fact fiction divide, a foundational trope of postmodernity. This leads to the question of what sort of visual analysis art education should be providing?

The first section ends with Charles Garoian and Yvonne Gaudelius' interesting and innovative performance piece, "The Embodied Pedagogy of War," which answers, in many ways, Levinas's call for an embodied eye. Through a repetition of phrases, their performative piece forces a distortion that must be heard. They juxtapose a cyborgian technologized body—an hyperaestheticized body that is enhanced through technology in a myriad of consumerist ways—and the technology of the reportage of the 9-11 event, raising questions of an affective body that feels the Other in an embrace of ethic responsibility. The play on the labels throughout the essay enhances such an ethics and makes the reader question where is and what is this "embodied self"?

In our next section, The Silences of Racism and the Diaspora, representation, under-representation and non-representation in art, art history and in the institution of schooling are raised. Who represents
whom? What are the silent assumptions as to the way the world is hege
monically presented? Such questions come under the scrutiny of the
next host of authors. Patricia M. Amburgy, Wanda B. Knight, and
Karen Keifer-Boyd discuss the identity markers of privilege, and the
absences that exist in schools; they question the way that a binary
complex of closed system differences define identities and label
categories. In what ways can these categories be deconstructed? How
might students become aware of the marks of privilege that are written
on their bodies? The authors offer a number of strategies that they and
others have put into deconstructive practice. One example of such
practice that surrounds the history of African art is raised by David
Gall in his essay, "African Art: What and to Whom? Anxieties,
Certainties, Mythologies." It is only recently that the representation of
African art by a Eurocentric racist colonial past has been overturned—
the differences and complexity of discourses that were homogenized
under the label "African Art" have become undone. Gall succinctly
claims that the recognition of plurality and difference, which is
fashionable in postmodern theorizing, is not enough, and leaves art
educators with the hypercomplex issue of the need to grasp and struggle
for a deeper understanding of African visual manipulative traditions.
Laura Fattal’s essay, "Piercing Gaze: Public Art in Schools" is also about
the question of representation to fill a missing silence. This time the
question of representation is centrally focused on the African American
and Latino leaders/dignitaries/heroes. The essay describes the
complexities of the representational process itself—identity politics
presents some unexpected difficulties as well as triumphs.

Schooling Silence, our next section, looks inside art classrooms. In
an innovative and self-reflexive essay, Bob Sweeney draws on the
theoretical writing of Deleuze and Guattari, William Burrough’s notion
of “viral language,” and John Cage’s claim of the “impossibility” of
silence to meditate on the way the “performativity” of silence is used
both affectively and effectively as a form of resistance by students. In
brings the reader to a space where art educators are called on to attend
to the in-between zone that opens up between the verbal-nonverbal
dichotomy when students in class perform what might be referred to
as a "deafening silence" as an ethical act. As a university supervisor,
Donalyn Heise carries this theme into the broader issue of pre-service
teachers as they fulfill their student teaching practicum. She raises the
question how can student teachers raise silences that the curriculum
usually avoids such as the threat of terrorism, abuse, oppression,
isolation, fear, racism, prejudices and intolerance, what Paulo Freire
called a “culture of silence.” Heiss shows how schooling unintentionally
silences the voices of individual students. Drawing on a social
reconstructivist perspective she argues for a curriculum as developed
by the Prairie Visions Nebraska Consortium for an Arts Education that
gives voice and empowers students so that they may be heard through
their own commemorative events that explore their experiences and
take notice of special people and significant memorable events in their
lives. Katie Roberts continues this discussion of curriculum building
that gives voice and overcomes silences by drawing on the Deleuze
and Guattarian notion of the rhizome so as to deconstruct the voice/silence
dichotomy. Roberts explores the nuances of the amorphous
“anding” to create an open-system dynamic art curriculum. Theampersand’s significance is the promise that art education as a fieldcomes to recognize the changed reality of postmodernism. Silence inthis model is explicitly recognized since, it is argued, a dynamicrhizomatic model recognizes multiple viewpoints, questionsownership, and redefines creativity not only as product but also theprocesses of art. Closed system curricular models, which are static, failin this regard.

Our last section looks at *Media Silences*. Media is a rich area ofexploration that plunges us immediately into a visual culture thatframes perceptions in any number of differentials, a point the Deleuzealways stressed when developing his views on virtual reality. Two ofthe three essays in this section deal with the Japanese art of *animé/manga*.Both essays complement one another in the way they explore thequestion of sex and gender identity formation of fans that take placethrough costume design (Cosplay) and narrative identification withthe *animé/manga* characters created. Jin-shiow Chen’s “Meditating onVoiceless Words from the Invisible Others: Young Female *Animé* FanArtists—Narratives of Gender Images” provides an insight into thefantasy formations that are at play at ComicWorld conventions whereJapanese *animé/manga* comics are marketed and the costumes are infull display. Chen interviews several fans attempting to grasp the sortsof identifications that are taking place both on the unconscious andconscious levels within the Cosplay world of *animé/manga*. Here, a
certain silence emerges within each fan-participant herself as to theforms of desire that remain elusive as to their own sense of consciousidentification. Marjorie Manifold’s “Imaged Voices - EnvisionedLandscapes: Storylines of Information-Age Girls and Young Women”furthers this exploration through an in-depth study of cyber-spacestorylining made possible through her daughter Josephina, who wasinvolved in a cyber-community of female friends called The TrinityGroup. Manifold adroitly and carefully teases out the questions ofidentity formation of adolescent girls. She does this through herunderstanding of the collaborative processes that takes place on-linebetween the female participants as they create their characters. Storylineauthors create fictive characters whose bios present a rich fantasy life thatmixes their personal histories with that of their characters within specificcontexts that enable them to work through their individualissues and struggles as in any fiction writing. Here, however, the imageof the characters is of primary importance. Their art presents apsychological profile that becomes rich for exploration as to thecharacter’s relationships, motivations, and actions. Manifold is able toexplore this fantasy life through the various artistic genres (*Shōjo, Bishōnen*, and *Yaoi*) of her participants and present to her reader thedialectics of contradiction in the involvement of such identifications:on the one hand, personal feminine autonomy is made possible, at thesame time, Manifold is also aware of the silences in these narratives aswell. Issues of racism, ethnic conflicts, and ageism are missing fromthenarrative/illustrative storyline repertoire.

This leads to the last essay, “Questioning Fantasies of Popular‘Resistance’: Democratic Populism and Radical Politics in VisualCultural Studies” by Jan Jagodzinski. This essay is a complementaryrejoinder to an essay that appeared in last year’s journal. The silence itaddresses is essentially a plea for a radical politics in visual culturalstudies. He argues that neo-liberalist pluralism has produced a formof “democratic populism” which is paraded as being inclusive andmulti-perspectival. The essay critiques the question of “pleasurableresistance” as it manifests itself in popular cultural forms as examinedmostly by John Fisk, who is an exemplary left-leaning critic. The essayends with a call not to overlook the political economy and a materialismthat has dropped out of favour in cultural (visual) studies.
Black Hawk Down and the Silences of Ridley Scott's "Realism"

Robert Nellis

A telling moment occurs in the film Black Hawk Down (Bruckheimer & Scott, 2001) when the "reliable" Shawn Nelson is literally struck deaf by the gunfire of his partner. Nelson can no longer hear his fellow American soldiers, their gunfire, or the screams of his dying enemies. Prior to losing his hearing, Nelson puts in a mouth protector, explaining that on his last mission, he almost bit off his tongue. Thus, Nelson ensures that he will be able to speak of any evil he hears, but, alas, he becomes deaf. Nelson's predicament somewhat parallels that of the audience of Ridley Scott's technically masterful film. Exposed to the depiction of an intense battle and immersed in a realistic rendering, one can hear only the immediacy of battle. Its deeper political implications have been silenced.

A saying laments that some can "see no evil; hear no evil." Where deafness falls, it becomes the role of art education to counter the silence and invoke the visual. In contrast, Black Hawk Down invokes a kind of deafness. The film is a triumph in the realistic portrayal of battle; however that triumph contributes to the film's problematic nature as an ideological text. Given the popularity of the film, art and art education need to unpack and explore the relationship between the film's realism and its ideological function.

Today, art education concerns itself with the broad mandate of "visual culture." "Media," television, popular music, advertising, and, of course, film comprise an important part of visual culture and thereby are increasingly of concern to art education.

In the current period of conflict and global uncertainty, war films become important media texts for study and teaching in art education, both for what they say about war, nationalism, and the Other, and, especially for their silencing of these issues. "Analysis" is an important strand in art education, especially in its concern to identify the function of media art in society because such art serves to legitimate ideological positions, which, in turn, legitimate interest positions. This paper offers some "ways in" to discuss one media text, the film Black Hawk Down, with students, by focusing on the film's social function, especially the silencing character of that function. Black Hawk Down is a realistic war picture depicting the experiences of US soldiers downed in a hostile section of Mogadishu in October 1993, but this film's very realism and focus on the soldiers' experiences enable the film to function as a hegemonic text, silencing voices critical of the US's real political and economic interest in its purportedly "humanitarian" Somali involvement.

Black Hawk Down

Black Hawk Down is about a group of vastly outnumbered American soldiers fending off an attack from hostile Somalis. The film is based upon actual events. In an introductory intertitle, we are told that, in Somalia in 1992, many years of clan warfare are causing "famine on a biblical scale," in which "300,000 civilians die of starvation." Mohamed Farrah Aidid is the most powerful warlord and rules the capital, Mogadishu. Aidid seizes international food shipments and uses hunger as a weapon. Consequently, 20,000 U.S. Marines are sent to Somalia to ensure the delivery of food and the restoration of order. In April 1993, after the Marines withdraw, Aidid "declares war on the remaining UN peacekeepers." The following June, Aidid's militia slaughters 24 Pakistani soldiers and begins targeting Americans. US Delta Force, Army Rangers and the 160th SOAR are sent to Mogadishu in August to remove Aidid and restore order. The main action begins...
six weeks into the three-week mission, as Washington grows impatient. The US forces who enter Aidid's secured part of the city to capture some of his high-ranking associates meet strong resistance from the militia and, it appears, most of the citizens of Mogadishu. Two helicopters are shot down, and the American troops caught in hostile territory must hold off the enemy until they can escape the following morning.

After the intertitle rendering of the back-story, the narrative continues. Hungry people storm a food shipment delivery, but Aidid's militia kills the civilians and claims the food for Aidid. (US forces witness this violence from a helicopter and request of their operational commanders that the observing forces be permitted to intervene but are told that such an action is outside the scope of their UN mission mandate.) US forces capture an important arms supplier of Aidid's. The US commanders plan a raid to capture several of Aidid's top officials. Several of the central characters of the story are introduced: the idealistic Eversmann, the experienced "Hoot," the former clerk Grimes, the uptight Captain Steele, the fatherly General Garrison, and the weathered but sardonic Lt. Colonel McKnight. The plan for the mission is to enter an Aidid stronghold, secure a parameter, capture some officials, and return to base. The estimated time to complete the mission is 30 minutes. US forces fly and drive into the hostile territory and capture and begin to load their prisoners. The plan goes awry when a soldier falls from a helicopter, placing an injured man on the ground. Soon a chopper is downed, and then another. Slowly, the soldiers gather at the second crash site with many wounded among them. Night falls, and US helicopters provide air support by firing upon militia surrounding the crash site. Come morning, with the assistance of a Pakistani armored division, the US forces escape to the safe zone of the Pakistani stadium. Some soldiers head back out for others remaining behind. In a closing intertitle sequence, we learn that "During the raid over 1000 Somalis died and 19 American soldiers lost their lives" (Bruckheimer, & Scott, 2001) and that after Aidid is eventually killed, Garrison retires immediately.

The film is based upon the book Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War by Mark Bowden (1999). This is a journalistic account of the events, the longest continuous firefight for American forces since Vietnam. Bowden employed a variety of sources from interviews, army records, and audio and videotapes to recount the story.

Criticism of the film characterizes it as excelling at surface realism, but not depth. Strick (2002) applauds (Ridley) Scott's direction, technical skill, and use of cinematography, but criticizes the film's bias and argues that Scott makes little effort to explain the fierceness of the Somalis, characterizing them as fanatical. Jacobson (2002) contends that Black Hawk Down both serves to rehabilitate the U.S. military in the post-Vietnam era and to depict America's confusion about its global role, especially in the early years after the Cold War. Coatney (2002) claims the film is not a "hoard of savages" movie like Zulu (1964) or Dark of the Sun (1968) (AKA The Mercenaries). Coatney sees it as a tribute to the courage and devotion of US forces and notes that the Department of Defense's Office of Public Affairs praised the film for its historical accuracy. Coatney acknowledges that the movie leaves uncertainties about why the Mogadishu battle happened and if it could happen again in face of US unilateralism and even arrogance. Coatney describes Somalia as a mini-Vietnam because the US overestimated the effect of its technology and power in face of indigenous pride and defiance, and was confused about its mission. Showalter (2002) argues that the Somalis are treated with respect in the film, as warriors not targets, and as better allies than enemies.
The Somali Crisis

Somalia has a thousands-year-old history. Somalia was known to Egyptians, and Somalis met with Chinese merchants in the tenth and fourteenth centuries. The Somalis' land was known to Greek merchants and medieval Arab traders. By the 1700s, Somalis had developed toward their present way of life, based upon pastoral nomadism and Islam (Library of Congress, 2003).

In colonial times from around 1891 to 1960, the Somali people were divided into five mini-Somaliland: British (in the north-central region); French (in the east and southeast); Italian (in the south); Ethiopian Somaliland (the Ogaden); and, what eventually became known as Kenya's Northern Frontier District (NFD). The Italian and British Somaliland were combined into the Somali Republic in 1960. From that time until 1969, the Republic underwent territorial disputes with Ethiopia and Kenya, but regularly elected governments. Public displeasure ensued after rigged elections in 1969, and consequently, Major General Muhammad Siad Barre took power in a bloodless coup on October 21, 1969. Siad Barre ran an oppressive military dictatorship for the following 21 years, playing off clan against clan in bloody conflict (Library of Congress, 2003).

The regime ended 1991 as the Somali state collapsed and was replaced by armed clan militias fighting for control (Library of Congress, 2003). After the Somali Republic collapsed, Somaliland withdrew from the Union with Somalia (Somaliland Mission, 2000). Somaliland has been comparatively stable in the south but has not been recognized by foreign governments. In 1993, the UN enacted a two-year humanitarian drive mainly in the south, but when, after much difficulty, the international body left in 1995, Somalia was still in disarray (Yahoo! Inc., 2002).

Jimmy Carter's Carter Center's Conflict Resolution Program monitored events during the UN troop presence in Somalia. Carter urged the UN to limit its operations to a humanitarian focus rather than to try to impose law and order. General Mohamed Farah Aidid wrote to Carter, asking him to mediate Aidid's conflict with the UN peacekeeping forces. Carter declined the request but communicated to UN officials Aidid's request to have an independent commission to investigate the Mogadishu events. Carter endorsed the idea of the commission. In October 1993, Carter urged the release of a downed helicopter pilot, Michael Durant, who was being held as Aidid's hostage. Durant was eventually released a week later (Carter Center, The, 2002).

The events on which *Black Hawk Down* is based occurred in the October 3, 1993 battle in Mogadishu between the U.S. Army's Rangers and Delta Force, and Somali men, women and children, whose armaments included automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades. The US mission started out as an effort to capture some of Aidid's associates and turned into a 17-hour firefight (PBS Online, & WGBH/Frontline, 1998).

Political Context of the Film's Release

The context of *Black Hawk Down*’s release found the film fitting well with and benefiting from the political mood of the time, which strongly advocated support for US President Bush, activities of American troops, and support for war as a litmus test for patriotism. *Black Hawk Down* premiered December 18, 2001 and had limited release on December 28, 2001 in Los Angeles and New York for Oscar consideration. The film was widely released in the US, Canada, and the UK on January 18, 2002 (Internet Movie Database, Inc., 2003b).

*Black Hawk Down*’s wide-release came two days shy of the one-year anniversary of Bush's inauguration as president and was one of the first big war movies of the Bush era. Like the war films of the preceding Republican administrations of Reagan and Bush Sr., such as of the *Rambo* and *Missing in Action* series, which are reactionary,
politically noxious pieces positioned as redemptive myths in America's post-Vietnam spiritual "recovery," Black Hawk Down glorifies American soldiers. As well, the film criticizes the Clinton policy that got the troops into Somalia and then the edict that brought them out again.

The picture opened to generally lavish praise. It was nominated for Academy Awards for director, cinematography, sound, and editing. It eventually won Oscars for both for sound and editing. The trailer was in wide exhibition leading up to January 18. Three things were noteworthy about the advertisement. It featured the song "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" by Bob Dylan, and it indicated that the film was directed by Ridley Scott and produced by Jerry Bruckheimer. Given that the movie features a song by the artist who arguably defined the ethos of 60s protest with "The Times They Are A-Changin," it surely seemed before its release to be an anti-war picture. Moreover, if Scott was at the helm, Black Hawk Down was a quality film. What did not match, however, was the presence of Bruckheimer, who, while he has produced some interesting films, generally produces loud, reactionary, and unreflective spectacles. Bruckheimer has also produced the patriotic, "realist" war television show Profiles from the Front Line (2003).

In January 2001, the US was in the midst of a military conflict: in the post-9/11 "War on Terror," the US had been bombing Afghanistan since October 8, 2001, and American forces had been there on the ground since at least November, working with members of the Northern Alliance to topple the Taliban regime for harboring Al Qaeda. Some people spoke against the war, but their voices were generally shouted down by predominantly favorable war coverage in the media. George W. Bush was riding very high in polled job-approval ratings for his handling of the post 9/11 crises and his identification and execution of the "War on Terror."

After America's defeat in Vietnam, military strategists gave new meaning to the idea of "the war at home." They now believe that 1960s protest combined with news coverage of the Vietnam War to destabilize political support for it and contribute to the US withdrawal. As result, public opinion is carefully managed in contemporary wars by allowing the media only highly structured and favorable "access" to conflicts. Correlated with this management of opinion, the post-9/11 "war on terror" engendered the emergence of a type of patriotism in which support for the President, the troops, and the "War on Terror" became crucial.

**Ridley Scott's Aesthetic**


Scott is known for interesting portrayals of women. Alien (1979) featured the strong, independent, and apparently childless Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) in a life or death battle with a newly born but lethal alien, suggesting an anxiety about motherhood, with a cat (an obvious trope for female sexuality) often nearby, seemingly to provide terrifying shock-effects, jumping out just when the audience expects the alien. Thelma and Louise (1991) depicts two women (Gena Davis and Susan Sarandon), who are abused and misunderstood by men and then fight back and become outlaws fleeing the police. G.I. Jane (1997) is about a woman (Demi Moore) who enters the brutal and demanding Navy Seal training program to struggle against chauvinism from her
colleagues, crawling through the mud all the way up to those at the highest levels of political power. Moore shaves her head, develops hard muscles, and comes to embody the warrior ethos.

Scott's films are also powerfully visual. Leonard Maltin wrote that Scott’s "artistic signature is an elaborate visual style, developed through years of experience as set designer and director of TV commercials. Scott studied art and film at the Royal College of Art in London before landing work as a set designer for the BBC" (Internet Movie Database, Inc., 2003a).

From early on in his career, Scott developed an aesthetic of grime, sweat, and dirtiness. Alien developed the idea that working in outer space could be dirty and sweaty, unlike work in the antiseptic portrayals of 1950s and 60s science fiction films and even their antithesis, Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. Particularly in the famous garbage compactor scene, George Lucas's Star Wars (1977) showed that the interior of a spacecraft could be dirty. However, Alien significantly advanced the suggestion that working on a spacecraft is dirty and sweaty, dark, dank, cramped, messy, and uncomfortable. Similarly, Blade Runner depicts a futuristic Los Angeles as a chaotic assemblage of advertising, traffic, rain, and darkness.

Scott is in slightly different territory in Black Hawk Down from that in which he usually treads. Unlike most of his other films, Black Hawk Down not only has no strong female character, but it has no major female characters. However, the closing credit sequence reveals that Scott dedicated the picture to his mother, who had passed away in 2001.

Otherwise, Black Hawk Down very much keeps with Scott's practice of the gritty, vivid representation of violence. The opening historical/back-story exposition sequences are presented by using a sort of blue filter, which distinguishes them from the film's main action. To present it, Scott uses a grainy, bleached-out mise-en-scène, which suggests the heat, discomfort, and "foreign-ness" of the setting for the US personnel. Scott also applies techniques by which flying lumps of dirt and debris can be visually articulated as bullets fly and the battle ensues. Action scenes also eschew smooth dolly movements in favor of shaky, hand-held camera perspectives. These techniques situate the viewer as though amidst the action. A perspective of predictable stability and distance is eliminated to create a sense of battlefield realism.

Of course, hand-held camera techniques are not new, for Hollywood directors have been borrowing them from their European colleagues for some time. Such methods were even used with great success in the early 1980s television series Hill Street Blues. Moreover, Stephen Spielberg developed the kind of battlefield aesthetic employed in Black Hawk Down in his 1999 Saving Private Ryan. However, Scott updates the vision. The subtitle of Mark Bowden's book, which formed the basis of Black Hawk Down is "A Story of Modern War." Scott's contribution both with and to these techniques is to bring them to a more modern context than Ryan's closing days of World War II.

Black Hawk Down's realism extends beyond the form of the aesthetic to its content, the images Scott shows. Viewing the film is a palpable, visceral experience. We see blood, partly severed thumbs, a dismembered hand with the watch still on the wrist, rocket-propelled grenades rushing toward the viewers' point of view, and dirt, sweat, and smoke.

As the soldiers fly in helicopters toward Mogadishu to undertake their mission, they fly through thick, black smoke. We are told that its visually impenetrable billows are from burning tires, set ablaze to warn the militia of the troops' approach. The choppers enter the spewing discharge and can see nothing except the immediacy of their predicament. This scene is realistic to be sure, but it also says something about one function of the realism: that of being a mechanism of
diversion from the historical and political dimension of the situation. The realist aesthetic of the film reflects its rhetorical position concerning the experiences of the soldiers on the front line. The assumption is that to the men in the field, in the heat of combat and full exercise of courage, politics is irrelevant, and this film is to portray these men and their experiences.

This point becomes explicit in a conversation between Matt Eversmann (played by Josh Hartnett) and Norm ‘Hoot’ Gibson (played by Eric Bana). This important exchange, bearing the heavy weight of authorial sanction, occurs near the beginning of the film, before the US forces enter Mogadishu for their mission:

Eversmann: “You don’t think we should be here.”

Hoot: “You know what I think? It don’t really matter what I think. Once that first bullet goes by your head, politics and all that shit just goes right out the window.” (Bruckheimer & Scott, 2001) Ostensibly, Black Hawk Down is not concerned with that which “goes out the window.”

A Silence

The tagline for Scott’s 1979 Alien is “In space no one can hear you scream,” which suggests something of the silencing of the Somali screams in Black Hawk Down. At the end of Black Hawk Down, white text on a black background laments: “During the raid over 1000 Somalis died and 19 American soldiers lost their lives” (Bruckheimer, & Scott, 2001). Clearly, something is not being said in these numbers, a ratio of 50:1. To the 19 US soldiers who died, the battle called for the ultimate sacrifice. However, an important aspect nuance of the conflict is not shown after the US forces fly through the black smoke into battle. When the smoke clears and the fatality outcome is 50:1, the courageous battle shown on screen is, in fact, revealed to have been a slaughter. However, the fact of the US slaughter of the Somalis is not articulated through the American perspective of Scott’s realism. The black smoke of Mogadishu gets into our eyes.

Moreover, in Black Hawk Down, more than just the smoke of burning tires is blindingly black. The predominantly white US personnel have their names emblazoned on their helmets. Although the US military no longer employs that practice, the American soldiers in the film have clear identities. The Somalis, in contrast, are nameless and indistinguishably faceless—a sea of hostile blackness. In terms of identity and individual humanity, the Somalis’ characterization is similar to the pungent smoke through which the US soldiers fly: both blind us to the realities of the battle.

We see the US soldiers fighting practically the entire population, which is armed with rocks, hand guns, automatic weapons, vehicle-mounted machine guns, grenade launchers and rockets. Less attention is paid to the US’s armored personnel carriers, helicopters, and satellite surveillance and communication systems, commanded by a central operations center.

Colonial Wars

Black Hawk Down depicts a Western power with great resources and highly sophisticated technology and weaponry fighting a vastly out-numbering African force. This element renders Black Hawk Down similar to accounts of 19th- and early 20th-century colonial wars. D.R. Headrick’s Tools of Empire (1981) argues that European technology helped create the conditions for subsequent colonial domination. Tools reinterprets the “new imperialism” and shows that an important element of 19th-century European conquests in Asia and Africa was technological advances. These advances, such as steam-powered river gunboats, quinine prophylaxis, rapid-firing rifles, steamships, submarine cables, and railroads, gave Europeans power over both non-European peoples and natural obstacles (Headrick, 1981). The book also provides accounts of colonial wars in Africa, in which the colonial
power’s military technology was responsible for the slaughter of the African people, whose pain was silenced.

So confident were European statesmen in the ability of their forces to overcome African resistance, that in the 1870s and 80s, the statesmen “drew lines on maps of the continent to indicate where their future conquests would lie (117). General Wolseley, with 6,500 men “armed with rifles, Gatling guns, and 7-pounder field artillery” (117), defeated the Ashanti kingdoms in 1873-74. Similarly, the French, using a 1400-man French force armed with Gras-Kropatcheks, defeated the Senegalese ruler Mahmoudou Lamine, whose forces were armed with spears, Dane guns, and poisoned arrows.

In the 1890s, European forces become even more overwhelmingly powerful with the addition of Maxim guns and quick-firing light artillery to their arsenal, weapons that turned “battles into massacres or routs” (117). In 1891, a French unit of 300 men used 25,000 rounds of ammunition in two-and-a-half hours to defeat the entire Fon army near Porto Novo. In 1897, a force of 32 Europeans and 507 Africans with the Royal Niger Company used cannons, Maxim guns, and Snider rifles to defeat the Nupe Emirate of Sokoto’s 31,000-man army.

In Chad, in 1899, 320 French forces, many of which were Senegalese tirailleurs, conquered the reportedly fierce Sudanese slave-raider Rabab’s 12,000 men and 2,500 guns. 27 British officers, 730 troops, and 400 porters defeated the Caliphate of Sokoto in 1903, and, in 1908, 389 French soldiers beat the 10,000-man army of Wadai.

Headrick writes, “Perhaps the most famous of all colonial campaigns—at least in the English-speaking world—was General Kitchener’s conquest of the Sudan in 1898” (117-118). Kitchener defeated the Sudanese Dervishes, whom the British believed “[w]ere skilled but fanatical warriors” (118), and was armed with the most advanced weaponry, including breechloading and repeating rifles, Maxim guns, field artillery, and six river gunboats shooting high-explosive shells.

Sir Winston Churchill participated in the battle and wrote an account in The River War: an Account of the Reconquest on the Sudan (1933). His comments and the battle’s casualty figures reveal the colonial mindset:

Thus ended the battle of Omdurman—the most signal triumph ever gained by the arms of science over barbarians. Within the space of five hours the strongest and best-armed savage army yet arrayed against a modern European power had been destroyed and dispersed, with hardly any difficulty, comparatively small risk, and insignificant loss to the victors (cited in Headrick, 1981, 118-119)

The casualty figures, after a scant 5 hours, were 20 Britons with 20 Egyptian allies and 11,000 Dervish dead, so that the latter outnumbered the colonial dead 275 to 1. On average throughout the battle, the British force, with its technology, killed about 36 Dervishes every minute, one Dervish killed about every 2 seconds. That was quite a “signal triumph,” indeed.

Two Levels of Silence

The realism depicting the US forces’ experiences in the Mogadishu battle of Black Hawk Down draws the viewer in close enough to hear loudly and clearly the experiences of the front-line US soldiers but simultaneously silences the broader political dimensions of the battle. This silencing establishes the film as a hegemonic text.

The political silence of Black Hawk Down operates on two levels. First, the film is silent at the level of the politics of the US mission in Somalia, and, second, at the broader hegemonic level, of the fact that the political dimension of the mission is silent. A main argument of the film is that for the brave men on the front line, politics are irrelevant. Their courage and honor are unaltered by the politics of the conflict, so the film invokes a separation between the men’s courage and politics.
This essay takes advantage of that separation and discusses the politics without commenting upon the men’s honor.

The real politics of the US involvement in Somalia is that it protects US interests. At the manifest level, the mission is framed as a humanitarian effort to save the Somali people from the genocidal caprice of the warlords. The film does not discuss why Somalia is in this situation or address why Somalia is poor and unstable or indicate that it is so because of its history of colonial domination. The humanitarian mission helps the immediate concerns of the people, yes. However, the mission also stabilizes the global system of Capital, which is the contemporary version of the previous colonial system, which has kept Somali in a position of subordination and vulnerability. The mission attempts to create a firewall around Somalia to contain the breakdown of administrative order. The mission attempts to manage the crisis and prevent it from spreading and destabilizing the system of global Capital, which has exacerbated if not caused the Somali crisis. The United States is the historically unparalleled and contemporarily unchallenged prime beneficiary of the contemporary system of global Capital. A mission that maintains the stability of that system maintains the interest position of the United States.

The second level of the film’s political silence is at the level of intellectual hegemony. To some in these times of contemporary global Capital, in this post cold-war era, there appears no overt ideological clash. To these observers, “freedom” has won out over communist tyranny, and free markets with attending liberal democratic institutions of support are being spread around the world with evangelical fervor. Where this proselytizing is resisted, most obviously today in the Islamic world, the clash is characterized as being between forces for and against modernization, or between reason and fanaticism, or, in the speeches by the US president, between good and evil. The dominant ideology of the contemporary global world is characterized by Slavoj Zizek (1999) as being “post-political.” According to this ideology, no great political obstacles remain to the Good. All that does remain is the detail of Enlightenment a few “dark” (in more ways that one) corners of the world to the “benefits” of modern markets and liberalism. Once that goal is achieved, the result will be the merry functioning of the calculus of opportunity, competition, and prosperity.

In today’s so-called post-political world, politics themselves are rendered as an extinct entity. All that remains is the “common sense” of free markets and liberal democracy. However, to render “politics” as an obsolete category says less about their obsolescence than about the particular political view being silently privileged. When one perspective is so “accepted” that it cannot be questioned, and opposition is almost impossible to articulate, then that perspective enjoys hegemony.

The fact that the political dimension of Black Hawk Down is so silent, that it is layered behind the film’s realism, the humanitarianism of the mission, and the valor of the US soldiers, that it is so “irrelevant” as to be nearly blasphemous to articulate, reveals that hegemony is at play. Moreover, if the political dimension were truly irrelevant, its articulation would not be a blasphemy against the troops; it would more likely provoke only an indifferent reaction. The politics of Black Hawk Down, especially when shrouded by the realistically depicted valor of the soldiers, is a hot button, suggesting that something very explosive and even dangerous does not wish to be revealed: the real interest of the US to preserve the system that facilitates its dominant position over peoples such as the Somalis.

Conclusion:
Educational Implications and Suggestions

Black Hawk Down employs a realistic aesthetic to depict US soldiers and their helicopters that were shot down in Mogadishu in October 1993. The film’s realism and focus upon “apolitical” battle experiences
function to hegemonically conceal US's real interest in stabilizing global Capital behind its ostensibly humanitarian mission in Somali. *Black Hawk Down* is based upon actual events of October, 1993 and has been hailed for its realism but decried for a lack of historical depth, especially concerning Somalia's history of colonial rule and subsequent internal war. The film was released in the early time of Bush II's America and fit well with the mood of the post-9/11 "War on Terror." This paper has discussed the film, the book upon which it was based, and some critical reaction. Ridley Scott has a history of presenting violence realistically, and *Black Hawk Down* 's very realism and the purported focus on the US soldiers' front-line experiences provide the means to silence the devastation of the Somalis during the conflict. This type of silencing has a significant history going back to depictions of 19th century colonial wars between Western powers and African nations. In addition, *Black Hawk Down* 's configuration of focus and style silences the US' s real interests in its Somali mission. There are the facts of the silencing. The fact of the silencing, the fact that articulation the US interest positions is silenced, points to its hegemony.

These findings suggest a number of educational implications and suggestions for working with war films. Some implications and suggestions are particularly germane to art and media learning contexts, but many are relevant in whatever subjects one may discuss a film such as *Black Hawk Down*, such as Language Arts and Social Studies. War films tell stories set in context of historical events—wars. It has been said that "War is the extension of politics." War necessarily has a political dimension, which gives the lie to "post-political" conceits, and that political dimension must be unpacked when working with texts such as these. In the art education context, an important question becomes, "How does the aesthetic of this piece support the work's purported rhetorical position as well as the silences inherent in that position?" Ten questions follow to consider in planning teaching around war films:

1. Why are war films made?
2. What is the history of the war depicted?
3. Is the film based upon another source, such as a book or magazine article?
4. What is the political dimension of critical reaction to the film?
5. What is the political context of the film's release?
6. What is the film's stated rhetorical position?
7. How do the film's aesthetic and stated rhetorical positions conjoin and support each other?
8. Are there historical precedents for this type of conjoining?
9. What are the facts of the silences of this conjoining?
10. What is the meta-silence; what does the fact of the above silencing reveal concerning a broader political level; what does it say about what is going on in the world?

**Notes**

1 Unless otherwise noted, the following quoted passage comes from Bruckheimer & Scott, 2001.


D.R. Headrick is an historian who looks at relationships between technology and imperialism. He is a professor of Social Science and History at Roosevelt University. His books include The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century (1981), The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850-1940 (1988), The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851-1945 (1991), and When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850 (2000).

References


"Catching Sight of the Permanent Possibility of War:"
Images of Totality and Words of Peace

Norm Friesen

Introduction

In Totality and Infinity (1969), a landmark critique of the Western philosophical tradition, Emmanuel Levinas poses the provocative question: "Does not lucidity, the mind's openness on the true, consist in catching sight of the permanent possibility of war" (21)? Levinas asks, in other words, whether knowledge of the truth has been "seen" in the western philosophical tradition? is in some fundamental way related to the war.

War for Levinas, a survivor of Hitler's holocaust, has very particular conceptual and sensual associations and overtones. Above all, Levinas associates it closely with the cold, "harsh" light of objectivity or "objectifying thought" (24, 28). He also understands it to be related more specifically with the "neutrality" and "impersonality" of light and vision, and particularly with what he calls the panoramic, "synoptic and totalizing...virtues of vision" (43, 23). Using his own particular language and references, Levinas characterizes this as follows:

We do not need obscure fragments of Heraclitus to prove that being reveals itself as war to philosophical thought... In war reality rends the words and images that dissimulate it, to obtrude in its nudity and in its harshness (21).

The obtruding "nudity" and "harshness" that Levinas attributes to war are characteristics that reveal themselves most clearly through vision. Levinas also emphasizes in this passage how this revelation of truth through war has been a part of western philosophical tradition from its earliest days from the time of pre-Socratics like Heraclitus.

However, Levinas' philosophy does not simply dwell on the negative and war-like characteristics of the philosophical tradition that has come before it. Levinas' thought is more concerned with peace, intimacy and what he terms "infinity" than with war, objectifying vision, and what he calls "totality." Infinity for Levinas actually entails an understanding of "peace" which is associated much more closely with the spoken word rather than with "vision" (23). Instead of being a part of the "synoptic and totalizing...virtues of vision" Levinas sees infinity as being "produced as [an] aptitude for speech" (23).

Unlike vision, speech has the potential to open up a relationship of dialogue with others or with what Levinas terms more abstractly "the other." The other is something that by its very nature cannot be comprehended in its totality, or reduced to some limited principal or frame of reference. It always "exceeds" or goes beyond these, and is precisely in this sense infinite. This "other," as Levinas explains, exemplified above all in "the face;"

the way the other presents himself, exceeding the other in me, we call the face. This mode does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, as a set of qualities forming an image. (50-51, emphasis in original)

Such a relationship, in other words, does not unfold through a series of prefigurations or predeterminations. It becomes manifest, as Levinas explains, in a "relationship of conversation" in which the other consistently "transcends" and "exceeds" calculation, control and even intentions or intentionality themselves (49-51).
It does not require a significant leap of the imagination to understand Levinas' conception of an all-encompassing, objectifying vision as manifest in recent wars—perhaps especially those in the Iraq and the Persian Gulf: aerial images of "weapons factories" used as a casus belli, the lines of tracer-fire and armament explosions lighting up the night sky, video feeds from fighter jets or guided missiles, and the oft-repeated image of a captured Saddam Hussein and of his statue being pulled to the ground: All of these and other "visions" seem to speak simultaneously of the ubiquity and all-encompassing nature of the images of war delivered to us by the media, and also of their objectified, fixed, orchestrated and controlled nature.

This paper explores the themes of vision, control, war and silence (or the absence of speech or conversation) in the context of the most recent of the wars in the Gulf, and the context of the post-9/11 North America generally. It will consider these themes by looking at images purveyed by the media and by government, and by comparing these to the less formal and coordinated imagery visible in the form of street- and protest-art. It will contrast the visual attributes exemplified in the former with the potentially "conversational" characteristics of the latter, and provide suggestions of how these characteristics can be cultivated in student art work.

**Wars and Visions of Wars**

Levinas' association of vision with war can be further understood in terms of the characteristics of sight and hearing as everyday sensory phenomena. Such characteristics have been explored perhaps most compellingly by phenomenologists—specialists in the theory and substance of "lived experience" or the "lifeworld." Irwin Strauss (1963), for example, describes the manifold nature of the senses of vision and hearing by examining commonplace phrases and expressions associated with them:

None of the modalities [of the senses] plays only in a single key. But in each of them the basic theme of self-and-other varies in specific ways... We "cast a glance" at something, "fix" something in our vision, let our eyes "rest on" something; but we "follow a call..." [we] "have to be told...." We say of someone who obeys us that he "listens to us." The unusual power of sound stems from the fact that sound can be divorced from its source, and that, following this separation, sounding and hearing occur for us simultaneously. We can flee from something which is visible in the distance. But that which is heard—be it sound or word—has already taken hold of us; in hearing we have already heard. We have no power over sound, word, voice, or "voices." (378)

In contrast to the enveloping yet intangible insistence of sound, Strauss emphasizes the cool, dispassionate objectification that is possible with vision. "The sense of sight," as Strauss explains, relies on a separation between the one who sees, and "that which is being seen;" it is, Strauss says, "the sense of identification and stabilization" (375). The "stabilizing" "fixing" and "identifying" qualities of sight tend to be of obvious importance in situations of war or where the vigilance of a "war footing" is sought. Perhaps more accurately, it is technologies which augment or multiply the power of sight that are especially valued in these situations. In Downcast Eyes (1993), an examination of the phenomenon of vision in modern French philosophy, intellectual historian Martin Jay writes:

historians of technology have pondered the implications of our expanded capacity to see through such devices as the telescope, microscope, camera, or cinema. What has been called the expansion of our "exosomatic organs" has meant above all extending the range of our vision, compensating for its imperfections, or finding substitutes for its limited powers. These
expansions have themselves been linked in complicated ways to the practices of surveillance and spectacle, which they often abet (3).

Examples of important “exosomatic” visual technologies used in the two gulf wars include satellite imagery, unmanned surveillance aircraft, night vision goggles, and video feeds from fighter jets or guided missiles.

**Total Information Awareness**

Similar extensions of the all-encompassing, surveying, identifying and fixing powers of sight are also becoming more familiar on the “home front” of the so-called “war against terror.” These technological extensions include video and infrared surveillance at borders, the development and implementation of facial, gait, and other “biometric” identification systems (Economist, 2003), and proposals for mandatory picture identification cards.

These surveying and identifying powers are emblematized with remarkable clarity in name and logo recently chosen for an important American “homeland security” initiative (figure 1: Original Logo of the “Total Information Awareness” Initiative).

Undertaken by the “Information Awareness Office” (IAO) of the Pentagon, this initiative has been named the “Total Information Awareness Program” (TIA). It is perhaps significant that this initiative is being undertaken under the auspices of DARPA, (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), the organization that developed and incubated the Internet in its early stages. In the case of the TIA program, DARPA is harnessing technologies developed for new generations of public information services and for the World Wide Web generally. To the dismay of privacy and civil rights groups (e.g. epic.org, 2004), the TIA initiative proposes to use these technologies in an attempt to “break down the stovepipes” that separate commercial and government databases (John Poindexter, as cited in Healy, 2003). This initiative is utilizing what are called “ontologies” to determine relationships between various data labels used in different databases. Though a variety of inferential-logic and other algorithmic procedures, the TIA intends to be able to identify the “patterns” or “signatures” that terrorists are said to leave behind through their actions and transactions (IAO/TIA, 2003).

The original logo of the Total Information Awareness program shows the “eye of provenance” or the “all-seeing eye” from the American great seal and dollar bill. The illuminated gaze of this disembodied eye is directed at the globe, which it is presumably capable of surveying it in its totality. As a document from the IAO itself explains, the eye scans the globe for evidence of terrorist planning and is focused on the part of the world that was the source of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. “Scientia est potentia” means “Knowledge is power.” With the enabling technologies being developed by the office, the United States will be empowered to implement operational systems to thwart terrorist attacks like those of September 11, 2001. (IAO/TIA 2003)
The TIA logo communicates not only a supreme confidence in the totalizing power vision and the efficacy of technology to amplify it; but it also says something important about visual communication itself: Namely, the ability of the visual to powerfully suggest and convey meanings. This is registered in the fact that the logo has, not surprisingly, created an uproar among those concerned with the protection of civil liberties (e.g. ACLU, 2004). As the IAO itself puts it, the logo has “become a lightning rod and is needlessly diverting time and attention from the critical tasks of executing that office’s mission effectively and openly…” (IAO/TIA 2003; p. 6). As a result of these problems, the IAO has recently changed the name of the program to the “Terrorist Awareness Program,” and significantly revised the logo design. (In addition, its director, John Poindexter has recently been forced to resign ?not as the result of the controversial efforts of the TIA, but as a result of his attempts to introduce a controversial “terrorism futures market” [CNN, 2003].)

**Delusion and Deceit**

Another important aspect of the power of the images to powerfully communicate certain types of meanings and significance is also highlighted in Irwin Strauss’ consideration of everyday sensory experiences (1963). Strauss underscores the power of the visual to provide indubitable evidence and proof. To illustrate this point, he uses the example of an investigator, “visiting the scene of the crime.” The investigator, as Strauss explains,

is convinced that he can look for and find the scene of previous events; he is just as certain that the words which were spoken there are forever gone. He does not expect, if he is “in his right senses,” that he can make that which was heard in the past audible to him. Because the audible is evanescent, whereas the visible endures, we write up contracts and affix our signatures after everything has been discussed and agreed upon. (374)

The visual, in other words, is able to provide proof that is less evanescent and therefore more definitive than what is heard: It is not the sound of the shot, after all, but the smoking gun that is valued as evidence.

The power of the visual as incontrovertible evidence can be important not only for surveillance and targeting, for example, but it can also play a significant role in the manipulation of public opinion in times of both war and peace. The characteristics of images both as incontrovertible proof?and as a powerful symbol?are perhaps most powerfully illustrated in the most recent Gulf War in the oft-replayed images of figures or statues of Saddam Hussein being toppled and images of dead or captured political prisoners?including Saddam himself. One of the most significant of these events?and also perhaps the most symbolically fraught?is one that occurred on Fardus (Paradise) Square in downtown Baghdad on April 9, 2003. As the reader may recall, the widely televised moments of the event began with the image of an American soldier momentarily draping an American flag over a head of a statue of Hussein. As the crowd’s loud cheers reportedly faded “the Stars and Stripes was removed from the massive statue and replaced with Iraq’s black, white and red flag” (ABC, 2003). What followed, of course, was statue itself being pulled down by an American military vehicle, and the alleged celebration in the streets by Iraqi civilians.

Despite the apparent indubitability of the photographic images of these occurrences, this sequence of events and the corresponding images have inspired widely divergent comparisons and interpretations. For example, some sources compared it favorably to the fall of “the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Iron Curtain” (Kellerhals, 2003) while journalist Robert Fisk has described it as “the most staged photo-opportunity since Iwo Jima” (2003).
Perhaps significantly, the grounds for Fisk's remarkable claim are provided by yet another example of photographic evidence from the same event. This evidence takes the form of a number of wide-angle shots rather than more selective, telephoto images taken of the square from an elevation, and distributed by Reuters newswire. (These photographs are still currently available from http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article2838.htm.) These images tell a very different story than the narrative suggested by much more widely propagated photos: First, they show the square to be blocked off by American tanks and other military vehicles; second, they make it clear that there are no more than 150-200 people in the large, and mostly empty square. In this way, these images undercut both the veracity and the symbolic significance associated with the more widely disseminated photographs of the event.

But empirical questions regarding the details of the event aside, the nature of the photographs, and the conflicting impressions and interpretations they can support suggests further important characteristics of the visual in general: Namely, its ability to delude, deceive and manipulate.

**Semiological Guerrilla Warfare**

The question of how to address the manipulation and deceit that can occur through vision and its enhancement in photographic and video media has become a significant concern in recent thinking about images and the visual in general. Unlike Levinas' and Strauss' characterizations of vision, this thinking tends not to look towards a comparative combination of the senses, or towards hearing and the spoken word as a way of overcoming the dominance of the visual. Instead, this set of ideas—which is associated above all with the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard? emphasizes the dramatic force of the visual and specifically, the power and autonomy images from advertising and mass media. These images, according to Baudrillard and others, tend not to be about any one thing in particular; instead, they invite their viewers to adopt a certain lifestyle, present themselves in a certain way, or to simply to be a particular kind of person and accept a certain "reality." Accordingly, Baudrillard argues that these insidious images have become autonomous of any reality that they might claim to represent. Collectively, he labels them "hyperreality," "simulation" or the "simulacrum." Using the semiotic and psychoanalytic terms of the "sign" and the "real," Baudrillard (1983) describes his notion of the "simulacrum" as follows:

It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. The image... bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum. (167, 170)

This absolute order of the image —"the empire of signs" as one author calls it— was seen by many to be exemplified in the 1991 Gulf War. The careful control of media coverage by the US military along with highly orchestrated images of hi-tech weaponry and destruction led Baudrillard himself to publish an article whose title provocatively proclaims "The Gulf War did not take place" (1995).

In the face of this absolute order of the image, the only form of resistance that seems available is to fight "fire" with "fire." Not to appeal directly to the reality of exploitation, injustice or war, but instead, to fight this barrage of carefully constructed signs with other signs that are also constructed strategically to persuade, coerce and to present an alternate "hyperreality." Again using terms borrowed from semiotics,
or the study of signs, author Umberto Eco (1986) describes this oppositional strategy as “semiological guerrilla warfare.”

...for the strategic solution it will be necessary, tomorrow, to employ a guerrilla solution.... The battle...is not to be won where the communication originates, but where it arrives.... For the receiver of the message seems to have a residual freedom: the freedom to read it in a different way.... I am proposing an action to urge the audience to control the message and its multiple possibilities of interpretation.... The universe of Technological Communication would then be patrolled by groups of communications guerrillas, who would restore a critical dimension to passive reception (143, 142, 138, 143, 144).

Semiological Street Art

An approach such as the one suggested by Eco can be seen to be exemplified in informal street art posted in opposition to the war Iraq in Paris during the spring of 2003. The first example of this art shown (figure 2: Photograph by the author, March 16, 2003) depicts an American dollar bill

Significantly, this artwork utilizes a symbolic vocabulary similar to that referenced in the “Total Information Awareness Office” logo — namely, icons or signs officially representative of the American state and of American power. But instead of an all-seeing eye, or a portrait of George Washington, the piece presents the dark image of a tank, with its barrel protruding. The implications of this juxtaposition of a weapon of war with symbols of commerce are manifold. On the one hand, this juxtaposition suggests that the economic and cultural authority embodied in the currency is actually itself derived from force, and not from negotiation or international mechanisms of trade. At the same time, this juxtaposition of symbols also suggests that the underlying reason for the war is perhaps not so much to rid the world of “weapons of mass destruction” or of a totalitarian dictator, but instead, that it is motivated by power, avarice, and monetary gain. In this way, this piece of street art can be said to invert or subvert important signs or symbols of American control or hegemony, restoring (as Eco says) a “critical dimension” to an almost invariably “passive reception” of the “message.” A similarly powerful set of symbols is combined in the second image (figure 3: Photograph by the author, March 16, 2003),
which shows a caged dove, with a closed lock protruding from the right side of the cage. The meaning of these two juxtaposed signs or symbols in this second image is perhaps less ambiguous than the image considered earlier: The bird of peace has been trapped, and is being forcibly confined and prevented from taking flight.

Although both these pieces of street art can certainly be effectively interpreted in terms of the "semiological guerilla warfare" suggested by Eco, they can also be understood in as having a somewhat different function. For their significance is hardly exhausted in the challenge they post to the "passive reception" of the unreal "simulation" or "simulacrum" that is said to surround us. They can be seen as doing more than simply "substituting signs of the real for the real itself," as Baudrillard would have it. For the signs or symbols in these images, of course, also refer to very palpable meanings and concerns in the current political-historical situation: These realities include the economic and cultural authority represented by the American dollar, the negative and confining effects of war, and the connection between brute force and economic (and other forms of) power. It might also be suggested that in referring to or evoking such meanings and issues, these images provoke a significant response from viewers?asking them to do more than simply re-interpret or re-arrange the signs produced by the "perfect descriptive machine" of the simulacrum.

One might even make the case that these two images invite "dialogue" or "conversation" in senses that perhaps have something in common with what Levinas means by these terms. The words appearing beside the image of the caged dove, for example, indicate that there are dialogical possibilities already implicit in the image: These words ask "Who will stop Bush?" Such a question underscores the fact that the picture also in some way directly addresses the viewer?whether this viewer is a passerby, a pedestrian or a tourist. Its address is a question that, like the plaintive look of the bird itself, implicates

the viewer in the current political and historical situation?in the possibility of unlocking the protruding padlock, and resisting the likelihood of war.

By doing this, this image makes use primarily of the symbolic potential of images and vision identified earlier: It communicates its message through the careful juxtaposition of two symbols whose meanings are self-evident, but that can mean very different things individually and in combination. It should be stressed that in both the image of the caged dove and of the American dollar, it is not any kind of photographic precision or verisimilitude that is of great importance. In both of these images, vision is not operating in its capacity as irrefutable or corroborating evidence. Instead, the visual qualities that are most important are the immediate recognizability of the individual symbols, and the arresting or clarity the effect or meaning of their juxtaposition. In a certain sense, these types of symbols are in the same category as pictographic signs that can be found on highways and in airports: they derive their meaning from conventional associations and the combination of such meanings.

There are a wide variety of examples of sets of such "iconic" images, and of ways that they can be combined to produce different types of effects. Many illustrative examples are available online. One interesting example of the juxtaposition of such images is provided by the recombination of visual "safety" symbols used in the Department of Homeland Security's "Ready.gov" campaign (see: Snyder, C. 2003; http://distributethis.org/beryllium/side/readygov/). Others are the stencil art of "Banksy" (Art of the State, 2003; http://www.artofthestate.co.uk/subpages/banksy.htm) that has recently caused a sensation in London, and the posters of el Cartel in Madrid (http://pagina.de/el cartel). Each artist mixes familiar elements in unexpected combinations to provoke and address the viewer, while at the same time referring to a clear and concrete political situation. In
the art classroom, students can be encouraged to construct similar images by (photo)copying images from symbol dictionaries (e.g., Modley, 1976) or from online sources (e.g., Ralph, 2003), and by exploring the sometimes-startling effects that their juxtaposition can produce. This can be done, of course, to create messages with a wide variety of political, cultural and personal meanings.

These same principals can be extended by also leveraging the power of vision and specifically, of photographs, as irrefutable or corroborating evidence. This generally involves the juxtaposition of closely-cropped photographic images or reproductions to form what is frequently known as “photomontages.” It is perhaps not insignificant that some of the first, politically-motivated photomontages emerged with the Dadaist movement in protest of the absurdity of the First World War and the conditions of the interwar period. Perhaps the most powerful examples in this connection are the works of the German John Heartfield (Helmut Herzfeld). These aggregate images juxtapose likeness of Hitler, Goehring and other Nazi leaders with situations that showed their real motivations and inclinations? Hitler’s connections with big business and big money, or Goehring’s role as “henchman of the 3rd Reich.”

There are excellent educational resources on Heartfield’s photomontages and the historical circumstances in which they were created. “Heartfield,” for example, is a Website that provides lesson plans and other educational materials (Martens & Konick, 2000; http://www.towson.edu/heartfield/4.html) illuminating this remarkable artist. Another is “Cut and Paste: A History of Photomontage,” which featuring images created by Heartfield alongside those of his contemporaries, as well as a number of the 1980’s and the present day (Palmer, 2004; http://homepage.ntlworld.com/davepalmer/cutandpaste/intro.html). These and other resources can be used in the art class to show the potential of the photomontage to express political, social as well as more personal meanings. Students can be encouraged use, combine and alter photographic images from other news and advertising sources, and to explore the new significances that their alteration produces.

By exploring the effects produced by juxtaposing images from different sources, the construction of students’ own meanings can be directly facilitated. Students can explore multiple possibilities of interpretation, rather than being the passive recipients of constructed meanings criticized by Eco. However, unlike Eco’s semiotic guerilla “warriors,” students should be encouraged to create the kinds of images that through their symbolism, juxtapositions and other characteristics? put an end to the metaphorical silence that is a part of the visual and totalizing characteristics of “objectifying thought.” Fighting a figurative semiological guerilla war in opposition to a literal one would seem only to affirm and entrench violence as the only means for effecting change. Taking such an approach might only strengthen Levinas’ vision of the “permanent possibility of war.” Instead images need to be facilitated and created that engender the “production” of an “aptitude for speech.”

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Documentary Rhetoric, Fact or Fiction? University Students React to the Film, Bowling for Columbine

Mary Stokrocki


As readers will quickly notice, the picture of a Website devoted to questioning Moore's perspective is “out of focus.” But it is precisely this “out of focus” notion of reality that this essay raises. How can one draw a distinction between fact and fiction in this postmodern age; between what is “clear” and in focus and what is not?

Introduction

In American schools, violence has evolved as one of our most riveting social problems. The FBI reported at least 28 cases of school shootings since 1982 (Diket & Mucha, 2002). Educators are concerned about the growing number of violent acts in schools across America and seek reasons and results. They insist that teachers pay attention to the pictures students create, discuss violence and related issues with them, and make time to talk about understanding a volatile world (Susi, 2001; Diket & Mucha, 2002). Freedman (1997) earlier advocated that teachers encourage students to examine the media. Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) advocate that teachers examine visual culture, notably the theme of violence, and its socio-cultural context. Jagodginski (1997) points out baby-boomer nostalgia and baby-buster counter-nostalgia as the real problem. Parents avoid the issues of violence and obscene influences. They want to return to their safe childhood. Schools do the same, consider the theme too controversial and thereby ignore the growing problem. Teachers need studies that report the results of practical investigation with students that lead to further examination of this complex problem of violence.

Purpose

As part of my new art education course, Teaching Visual Culture, I encourage my students to be more reflexive. Reflexivity is the process of becoming aware of one’s immersion in the everyday and popular culture in order to examine one’s own position, sometimes through intertextuality. The inclusion of another text and its meaning inside a dominant text, is called intertextuality. In this case, the inserted text is history. The assumption is that viewers understand the inserted message (Sturken, & Cartwright, 2001, p. 256). Current trends also assume that viewers understand the history of media and cultural products and their truth.

I arranged for students, a class of 24 university art education majors (mostly Caucasian, only one African-American student), to suggest a film of their choice to critique. Two students suggested Bowling for Columbine (Moore, 2003) and the class consented to discussing it. The film sequence that they watched in class was the “History of America” by the South Park animator Matt Stone. They wrote their first impressions. At home, many students watched the entire video as well. All students returned to class the following week to discuss it. After reading and analyzing their reactions, I was surprised to find...
that students were awe-struck by Michael Moore's powerful film work, as were the judges at the 2002 Academy Awards when he won the Best Documentary and the 55th Anniversary Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 2002.

Overview of the Film

The main thread of Michael Moore's (2003) documentary is the Columbine massacre where two students opened fire on fellow students before turning the weapons against themselves, thus plunging the entire country into stupefaction and horror (Marque, 2003). The movie opens with the report, “It was another typical morning... The President bombed another country... and two boys went bowling in the morning...” The seemingly innocuous report is loaded with subversive messages. Moore's scathing new documentary attempts to find answers to the question why American culture is steeped in violence and fear (Topel, 2003). He interviews the head of a bank that gives away guns, a high school drop-out who’s disappointed he only made number two on the town's bomb threat list, South Park creator Matt Stone, shock rocker Marilyn Manson, and Charlton Heston, President of the NRA. The film is amazingly complex as the meanings unravel.

Research Methods

I used a simple questionnaire, followed by a class discussion that I audiotaped and transcribed. I adapted questions from educator Pang (1991) who advocated teaching children about social issues. She wanted to examine cultural stereotypes by asking children their opinions about cartoons in the daily newspaper. I found her questions leading and limited. I kept her questions about purpose, characterization, power, vocabulary labeling, voice [dialogue], and added others involving morals and truth. My findings include questions, examples of students' responses, a discussion with reference to critics of Moore's film, and history of Moore's film tactics. The structure of Pang's questions is rhetorical and lead to further questions, similar to Moore's use of rhetorical fiction, which is discussed at the end of this paper.

Findings

Students heartily applauded Moore's view of the importance of guns in a brief history of the United States. Students were enthralled with Moore's provocative essay on gun violence in the United States. Like so many reviewers, students find Moore's charisma and persuasiveness as a showman very entertaining. He also has a history for faking scenes and so people cannot believe all they see. Moore is skillful enough that we don't recognize when we're being fooled. His ambushing Charleston Heston for an interview is a bit of counter violence. So what happened to dialogue or is this a Moore monologue? Regardless of how dubious its documentary tactics may be, Bowling for Columbine is powerful, thought provoking (Berardinelli, 2002).

What is violence? Students responded: an act of aggression against someone; an angry action, something hurtful or bad stuff on a massive scale; something dangerous; causing physical or mental pain against someone else or yourself, and a state of disharmony. In summary, violence is an unjust exercise of power.

What is your first impression? Some students regarded the opening as “surreal in its juxtaposition of bowling with children playing with guns.” Others found it confusing. Still others were shocked to discover that a person can “really open a bank account to get a free gun” in Colorado.
What is your overall reaction?

Students found the documentary to be entertaining, funny, and educational. Several students regarded the interviews as strange, hyper, but revealing. They were generally amazed at connections Moore made between Lockheed Martin, the world’s largest weapons manufacturer located in Littleton, Colorado and the Columbine shootings which took place near there. Another shocking linkage was the story of a six-year old boy who shot a six-year old girl near his depressed hometown of Flint, Michigan and the welfare-to-work program that forced his mother to work and leave her children unattended. One student found the film very racist and deliberately offensive. Another student thought the portrayal was blunt and negative.

What is the film’s purpose? Most students thought the purpose of the film was to expose the United States’ preoccupation with guns and scare tactics. Some students pointed out, “Even a baby or a dog can own a gun (in the animation sequence). The whole movie depicts human fear not just guns!”

How does the animator characterize people? In the animation sequence, students noticed that Matt Stone drew the characters all the same, “with big heads and eyes, just different colors.” I asked further, “Does the animation have a balance of characters?” Students generally found racial balance with a few token women, such as the Salem witches, children, and old folks. All characters are the same age and no one has a (obvious) disability. My one African American student noted, “the depiction of Native People as savages and African Americans as poor slaves as in early history books. White Americans are made to look ignorant. Historically, it showed how it all started with the pilgrims coming over and killing the Indians with guns.” Another student interpreted, “It is a dark humorous animation that exploits many American atrocities. A female student complained, “The film focuses on guns and fear from a male chauvinist view and I would like American history told from a female perspective.” Students realized that the animation sequence was a satirical play on America’s gun civilization. Later, I rented the video when it was released and was stunned to see that the animation, the most creative part of the documentary, was missing. Oh well, it must have been an example of overkill [pun] anyway.

What words are used to label certain groups of people? Examples that students cited were “savages or injuns” for Native Americans and “negroes “for Afro Americans. What words put down people? One student noticed that the director equated groups such as the KKK with the NRA throughout the film to suggest white supremacist groups. These organizations have different agendas, even though Moore equates them and makes them overly simplistic.

What literary devices do you notice? Feldman (1970) earlier suggested that art teachers examine the literary components of cinematic forms, such as place, sequence, plot, and symbols. Students discovered that Moore’s filmic sequence suggests that United States history is cyclical—the same old war games, but rearranged historical facts. The plot is one big “race and chase” scenario implied a female student. Although the documentary place starts in Columbine Colorado, the exploration expands to include choice United States and world sites. The documentary is” full of overstatement,” guessed a second student. Another student noted that Moore blames the US government “for every social ill from the Y2K scare, Killer Bee panic, drive-by shootings, and the terrorists as evil doers.” A fourth student suggested that the US government is symbolized as “a bullet or bomb.” Students seem overwhelmed by the spectacular drama.
How does the music contribute to the sense of the film? Students found that the music episodes were emotionally effective at particular places in the movie. An example was Nat King Cole's song, "What a Wonderful World" that accompanies quick edits of Saddam speaking, 3,000 people murdered in Kuwait, and such headlines as US bombs Iraq weekly in 1991, 500,000 children died of bombing or sanctions, and ends with the bombing of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. This sequence ends with the sarcastic statement, "It's a great place to raise children."

Who is pictured as powerful? Power is the ability to influence and control people. Students definitely agreed "the white guys are powerful because they have the guns." Who is the weakest? They all agreed that the white guys also were weak, "trigger happy, scared men."

Several students replied the African Americans were the strongest because "they withstood maltreatment." Who is the smartest? Another student felt the animated bullet that acted as narrator seemed the brightest. A third student sarcastically quipped, "Looks pretty black and white to me."

Whose voice predominates? Freedom to give an opinion is voice. In the animation sequence, some students found that the narrator spoke fast with a southern accent, which made him appear ignorant and uneducated. One student noted, "The people have an exaggerated Southern white accent and Moore puts down ignorant people who need to be put down." Moore seems to be sarcastic and "mocks Americans in general." I challenged students, "What is ignorance and who determines it?"

What is the nature of dialogue here? Students realized that there was little dialogue between characters. They noted, "The animation is

narrated by a dancing bullet and the tone or style is in-your-face humor." In the film, director Michael Moore goes after Charleston Heston with the camera, which appears to be an aggressive act. The ambush interview is a Moore trademark and he used it to trap Charlton Heston to unmask himself as uncaringly racist (Fauth. 2003). I summarized, "The film is full of binary oppositions or two-sided opinions, such as good/bad guys and black/white people. 

"Contemporary theories of difference have demonstrated the ways these oppositional categories are interrelated and are ideologically and historically constructed" according to Sturken and Cartwright (2001, p. 350). I prompted students further, "The power issue is complex because many forces compete for attention. Dialogue does not occur under overly vigilant conditions. So what's his solution? Moore can deconstruct forever, but how will he reconstruct society?"

What is the moral of the story? How is the film good? Students indicated that they found the film controversial. Some statements were "The documentary mostly expressed an anti-gun sentiment; it showed that the person with the gun has the power; The Whites seemed stronger, but Blacks want to live in peace."

How is it bad? Some students feared that the film's message might be taken literally—it's OK to shoot people. Another student found the story exaggerated. Others considered Moore's opinion as one-sided and extreme. They interpreted, "The portrayal is not a respectful view of the American heritage; White men try to run away from what they can't understand; and Most of the blame for violence seems to be placed on the Southern rednecks. I therefore proposed, "The film then raises more questions about our history."

What would you change in the characters, language, plot? All students agreed to change nothing. One student preferred the blunt
and offensive characters. Either they were tired at the end of class or not interested in talking about art and would rather make it.

**What is the problem that most young boys face in education today?** When discussing the murder of classmates at Columbine High School by two boys, students admitted that peer pressure was intense. I asked about the atmosphere of the school and the pressure to succeed. One student interviewed in the film complained that teachers scare you to conform. He moaned, “Don’t mess up or you will be a fag forever!” Such a comment is not school related, but part of the dominant heterogeneous male culture. Kimmel (2003) interviewed male adolescents to discover what was going on in their angry heads and discovered that insulting their manhood was the ultimate disgrace to invite violent reactions. Peer pressure and academic pressure are really separate issues, but schooling as a social phenomenon is incredibly complicated.

**How is the film true?** Students believed the film’s message as “the truth.” They commented, “It’s disturbing how Americans are full of fear. The film “very truly shows the history of the US,” one student emphatically announced. **How do you know?** I challenged. Not one student checked the facts or the Internet reviews. Then some students acknowledged, “It’s a not so nice fairy tale, we need other minority views, and it’s biased because many whites fought for freedom and civil rights too.”

**What are other views on history?** I offered other views on truth and history. Moore is very selective in documentaries and his short history. All history is an interpretation. Postmodernism teaches us that we have no grand narratives, just short stories (Lyotard, 1984). Postmodernism questions traditional explanations or meta-narratives about the human condition or universal ideas, such as presence, truth, authority, and progress (Ibid). Another problem is that this is not a history of America—only the United States. Our neighbors to the north and south have their own version of American history. Students were amazed that I suggested that facts didn’t exist, only interpretations. According to Nietzsche (1977), “There are no facts per se. What is ‘known’ represents a group of ‘phenomena’ or appearances that are tied together and ordered in terms of a particular perspective and reflect the vital demands of a center of Will to Power” (Allison, 1977, p. 194). One student was so surprised about the negative views that she asked for a copy to share with her friends.

In Britain, McRobbie (1992) points out that moral panics play a major role in conservative politics. Similarly, neo-fascist youth groups represent similar dissent in German contexts (Jagodzinski, 2002). A counter hegemonic (control) struggle takes place in different sites, such as the law, the mall, family, school, and in popular culture. What makes this film powerful is its role in promoting dissent and multiple interpretations. Students failed to see this aspect at first.

**Further Discussion**

Students initially were enthralled with Moore’s provocative essay on gun violence in the United States. University students paid attention to the exaggerated style, documentary genre, and parodic conventions of the film (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 269). Their lack of questions about the truth of the story, however, amazed me. **Parody** is the imitation of either formal or thematic elements in a literal or filmic work (Lynch, 2003). In this case, United States history is imitated in a humorous way. Throughout the film, Moore creates intertextual sequences by combining historical text references and research that is ungrounded to affect its meaning inside the present text with the
assumption that viewers understand the inserted text. His work has been lauded as entertaining and breathtaking by many leading critics; yet other critics find his work is full of documentary rhetoric, political undertones, historical deception, and educational neglect.

**Documentary Rhetoric or Fiction?**

The art of persuasion or rhetoric is the ability to use language to sway people to accept some opinion or course of action. Rutgers Professor, Jack Lynch (1999) distinguished three types of rhetoric. Lawyers use **forensic rhetoric** to frame an argument in a case and politicians use **deliberative rhetoric** to persuade their audience to take (or not to take) some action. However, filmmakers may use **epideictic rhetoric**, the use of powerfully affective language—pictures, to praise or blame someone or something. Originally from the Latin word, fingere, to fashion or to form, fiction is usually a narrative or story. So filmmakers use rhetorical devices to convince people of their views on something. In this film, Scenes are full of hyperbole, and exaggeration, as noted by the frequent use of the term “hyper” by students.

**Political Undertones**

Some reviewers found aspects of Moore's thesis believable. He is a creative political propagandist with his clever phrases like "commander-in-chief," but some of the film is beating a dead horse. There is meaningless banter and lots of silence; wondering whether or not Hitler ever went bowling. The commentary is an interesting perspective, even if it doesn't always work, and the additional interviews give you more Moore (Topel, 2003). Some reviewers find Moore's charisma and persuasiveness as a showman very entertaining. He also has a history for faking scenes, so people cannot believe all they see. Moore is skillful enough that we don't recognize when we're being fooled. His ambushing Charleton Heston for an interview is a bit of counter violence. Regardless of how dubious its documentary tactics may be, *Bowling for Columbine* is powerful and thought provoking (Berardinelli, 2002).

**Hidden Theme of Historical Deception**

Meaning is multi-layered and conflictual, never immediately available, according to deconstructionist Derrida (1976). Throughout his work, Moore uses three obvious themes: his status as the spokesman of the working class, the vices and corruptions of wealth, and the evils of the United States as unveiled in moorexposed.com. Hidden in Moore's work, however, is a fourth theme, which is the ability to historically deceive. **Metonymy** is the rhetorical or metaphorical substitution of one thing for another based on their association or proximity. For example, in the animated history sequence, action happened so quickly that viewers laugh but find it difficult to decipher the sequence. Moore equates the NRA with the KKK as a terrorist organization (Hardy, 2003). This transformation is a brilliant example of metonymy:

Hardy (2003), who is a lawyer, explained the facts of this historical confusion:

The NRA was founded in 1871 — by act of the New York Legislature, at request of former Union officers. The Klan was founded in 1866, and quickly became a terrorist organization. One might claim that while it was an organization and a terrorist one, it technically became an “illegal” such with passage of the federal Ku Klux Klan Act and Enforcement Act in 1871. These criminalized interference with civil rights, and empowered the President to use troops to suppress the Klan. (Although we'd have to acknowledge that murder, terror and arson were illegal long before that time — the Klan hadn't been operating legally until
1871, it was operating illegally with the connivance of law enforcement.)

Topel (2003) finds that Moore's most controversial historical bit is a montage of the sordid history of American foreign policy disasters set to Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World." The sequence has been attacked as facile, but critically disingenuous. The indignant depiction of reality is not a crime, neither artistically nor morally. As Congress moves to give the President power to wage preemptive war while a man-hunting sniper is on a killing spree in the nation's capital, *Bowling for Columbine* is certainly the most pressing movie playing in American theaters right now. Perhaps a world as outrageous as ours deserves a filmmaker as blunt as Michael Moore (Fauth, 2003). The role of radical interpretations is to heighten awareness of different views and to adopt a complex attitude towards such controversial issues (Stam. 1989, p. 22).

**Educational Neglect**

Another of Moore's faux pas is the fact that he is not an educator, never questions educators, nor cites any educational research. In a cross-national analysis of the violence in school systems, Akiba (2002) discovered that national systems that produce greater achievement differences between high- and low-achieving students tend to record more violence. He advocated the need to understand different perceptions of violence by students and teachers, to equalize the quality of education for all, and to study poor instruction, like tracking and students who perceive themselves as failures. National educational trends often cause problems.

**Future Implications**

Teachers need to instigate discussion of media, including documentary film, in order to push students to look for the different dimensions of manipulated imagery and in this case, violence. Violence in the United States is a complex issue. Much of the blame is displaced and involves issues of racism, classicism, and foreign policy as Moore suggests. Teachers need to define other categories for critical review that students often overlook, such as the uses of rhetoric and the truth. Teachers can also introduce students to the website, Youth for Socialist Action, a place where students can voice their views and read about others (Helin & Ritscher. 2003). Teachers also must encourage students to find counter reviews on a subject and the rhetoric behind it right in their own community, as Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) suggest. Educators must push students to probe such questions with "a critical eye" and look for hidden socio-political and economic complexities and contradictions.

**References**


The text below is the narrative of our performance at the National Art Education Association conference in April 2003.

In a darkened room in the Minneapolis convention center, the two of us stood facing each other. The floor was covered, littered, with newspapers; their 64-point headlines reporting about the "progress" of the war. A single harsh light shone diagonally through the space, illuminating us while casting a pall of long oblique shadows. In droning voices we began by repeatedly spelling out the words "planned obsolescence" in unison. We alternated the remaining parts of the narrative to represent the fragmentation of our bodies by the technology of war. Like the reporting of the news, which describes the colonization of the body by war, "imbedded" within the text of the narrative are excerpts from Wired magazine (2002), describing the colonization of the body by the most recent developments in medical technology.

It is 6:30 a.m. and your body is startled by a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq.

The impact of the war also led us to a performative response; perhaps because we are both performance studies scholars or perhaps because our bodies needed to respond. The reason for our performance was to blur the distinctions between theory and practice. In the same way that the wetness on our cheeks is the first sign to alert us to the fact that we are crying without even realizing it, our bodies responded to the war, alerting us in visceral ways that we wouldn't otherwise have recognized.

In March of 2003 we sat huddled over the computer trying to make sense of the paper that we were trying to write on the obsolete body of art education for presentation at the National Art Education Association (NAEA) conference in Minneapolis. When we began the paper the war on Iraq had not yet begun but it was daily becoming more of a real possibility. The buzz about the impending war became louder and louder as we lived and worked, not in an mythical ivory tower isolated from the world but in the midst of 24-7 media coverage of the imminent attack. It became clear to us, as it did to most of the world, that it was no longer a question of whether we would attack Iraq but rather when we would do so.

By the time of the NAEA conference the war had begun and it was no longer possible for us to ignore it in our presentation. As we were writing about the body and embodiment for the paper our bodies were absorbing the vicarious impact of the war in such a way that to not speak of it in our presentation would have been to deny the truth.

The impact of the war also led us to a performative response; perhaps because we are both performance studies scholars or perhaps because our bodies needed to respond. The reason for our performance was to blur the distinctions between theory and practice. In the same way that the wetness on our cheeks is the first sign to alert us to the fact that we are crying without even realizing it, our bodies responded to the war, alerting us in visceral ways that we wouldn't otherwise have recognized.
According to a mapping of the human physiognomy, a significant portion of the body has been colonized by endoskeletal technology.\(^1\)

Your body reaches over, extending its right arm and hand.

It reaches over to turn off the alarm clock on the bed stand.

The right index finger of your body pushes the stop button on the *Emerson SmartSet* radio.

With its index finger and thumb your body turns on the bedside lamp.

Your body turns on the lamp in this way.

As the right leg of your body pushes out from under the covers, the left leg of your body follows as it sits up on the side of the bed.

Your body’s two feet are flat on the cold floor now.

From a sitting position your body stands and turns to the left.

With one foot in front of the other, it walks around the bed.

On its way out of the bedroom, your body switches on the *Sony Trinitron* to CNN.\(^2\)

...listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, it enters the bathroom.

*Voice box (Vocom)*: Prefabricated implants are pushed against paralyzed vocal cords in the thyroid cartilage, which force them to tighten, restoring speech.

After doing so, your body switches on a bank of 6 incandescent lights.

Having illuminated itself your body stares into the large mirror examining itself.

Maneuvering a shiny metallic swivel handle, your body turns on the water faucet.

It fills the basin with warm water and with cupped hands it splashes itself.

While pressing on a pump, your body’s right hand dispenses soap into its palm.

Bending its arm at the elbow, it raises the foamy substance to its face.

In an upward and downward motion its hands lather its facial parts.

It fills the basin with warm water and with cupped hands it splashes itself.

Next, with its electric toothbrush filled with *Colgate*, your body then cleans its teeth.
As the right hand of your body returns the toothbrush to its holder, its left hand reaches over and turns on the showerhead.

After the left leg of your body steps into the shower, your right leg follows.

As your body receives the gentle massage of the adjustable WaterPik™ showerhead, Wolf Blitzer's report of collateral damage, ...

...report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage, report of collateral damage emanates from the bedroom television set.

**Ear (Clarion II Bionic Ear):** An external processor (worn behind the ear like a hearing aid) converts sounds into digital code, then transmits it to a cochlear implant. The acoustic nerve in the ear canal then interprets the signal as sound.³

After drying itself, your body reaches for the Kathie Lee™ 1600 to blow-dry its hair.

Your body can no longer hear the report from the high-pitched sound of the dryer.

Upon leaving the bathroom, your body turns off the lights and returns to the bedroom.

After dressing itself your body straps a Timex™ onto its wrist.

Using the tips of its index finger and thumb it adjusts the dial to the correct time.

Next, using its left hand your body picks up a pair of eyeglasses.

As the left hand holds them steady, your body's right hand wipes its lenses with Kleenex™.

As one foot precedes the other, your body walks down the staircase to the kitchen.

It turns on the kitchen Sony™ to CNN™ only to catch suicide bombings in Baghdad, ...

...suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad.

**Eyes (Smart eye band):** A device (worn behind the ear) generates a magnetic field that activates the implanted muscle. The band, designed primarily for reading, can be switched on and off.⁴

Opening the Amana™ refrigerator, your body pulls out a carton of processed orange juice with pulp.

After filling a glass, it downs a 1000 ml. of Vitamin C and a multiple vitamin pill.

It then fills the Krups™ coffee grinder with Sumatra Mendheling and presses on the switch.
As your body grinds the beans to a fine consistency the water comes to a boil.

The teapot whistling on the stove heard throughout the house penetrates its ears.

Your body's olfactory smells the freshly brewed coffee dripping into an insulated stainless steel Thermos™ mug.

It then places a creamer into the Kenmore™ and micro waves its contents to lukewarm.

After pouring the cream into the coffee, your body gets a whiff from the electric bread maker.

Having filled it with ingredients the night before, it kneads and bakes automatically.

Its buzzer goes off telling your body it is time to take out the fresh loaf for breakfast.

The Sunbeam™ toaster requires your body to push down a lever after it places the slices in its slots.

Popping up after it is ready, the toasted bread is buttered for your body to eat.

As it is walking out the door to the Plymouth Voyager™, your body hears Christiane Amanpour.

Her televised body tells your body about the day's body count,...
...toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime.

Heart (AbioCor heart): this titanium and plastic blood pump replaces the human heart. A battery belt worn around the patient's midriff feeds electricity to the heart. To recharge, the patient plugs into an AC outlet.\(^6\)

Having arrived at the stoplight, your body pushes on the brakes with its right foot.

As the Voyager™ comes to a halt, your body turns on the windshield wipers.

Your body's eyes can now see the street more clearly as it drives ahead.

The light turns green and your body shifts its foot from the brakes to the throttle.

At 3500 RPMs it can hear the smooth shifting of gears in the transmission.

Another red light and its foot presses on the brakes only to change to throttle.

The light changes immediately upon approach and your body has to quickly adjust.

Its eyes keep shifting between one side view mirror to the next, and the rear view mirror.

Traffic is heavy so your body feels anxious as it maneuvers the Voyager™.

Enroute to its destination, your body witnesses a large construction crane lifting heavy machinery.

As the load is gently lowered onto a curvilinear building, your body senses relief.

As if in response to this stimulus, it turns the knob of the car radio with its index and thumb.

It's Bob Edwards on NPR's Morning Edition™ reporting refugees caught in crossfire in Basra,...

...refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra.

Nervous system (VNS therapy model 102 pulse generator): An electrode embedded in a nerve in the neck activates a generator every few seconds, preventing epileptic seizures and alleviating depression.\(^7\)

As your body steers the Voyager™ into the lot, its eyes search for parking.

Finding a spot, it pulls in, applies the brakes, and turns off the ignition.
With its left hand it opens the door and slides its legs out onto the pavement.

After it stands up, it turns around, grabs its briefcase, and shuts the door.

Inserting the key into the slot, it locks the door and begins to move away.

As it places one foot in front of the other, it walks toward its workplace.

A number of obstacles have to be negotiated to prevent collisions.

A tree, brick wall, several other bodies, a trashcan, a fire hydrant is encountered.

Upon arriving at its destination, the right hand of your body pushes on a lever.

Opening the door, it enters the building and walks to a stairway.

There, it lifts one foot after the other to ascend to the second floor.

The hand of your body presses another lever to open yet another door.

Having entered the space of its office, it walks immediately to the Macintosh G4™.

Its right hand grasps an electronic mouse and pushes a button to reboot.

Electronic email is the first to appear on the screen reporting that Allies intensify air assault,...
Looking upward it sees the four florescent light fixtures suspended from the ceiling. One in particular captures your body's attention with the sounds of its buzzing ballast. The eyes of your body focus on the greenish tint of the lights to escape the confrontation.

After 45 minutes have passed the other thrusts its body upward and stands upright. It turns to its right and places one foot in front of the other and walks out the office.

As it does, your body's mind wanders, recalling the daily news reports while listening to the buzzing ballast...

...listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast.

Arm (Neural bypass robotic arm): Electrodes implanted in the cerebral cortex send neuron signals to a microprocessor in a wearable computer. It matches impulses to different arm movements. Once trained this system can drive a robotic arm.

...your body is startled by a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq, a voice reporting the War in Iraq.

Left ventrical (Novacor): An electromechanical pump inserted into the abdominal wall pushes blood into the arteries.

...your body switches on the Sony Trinitron™ to CNN™...Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties, Listening to the latest casualties...

Liver (Bioreactor): An external bioreactor—essentially a portable dialysis machine made of plastic foam—removes toxins from the patient's blood.

...reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage, reports of collateral damage...

Hand (Dextra): Sensors in the artificial and respond to electrical signals from the arm muscles and tendons. The signals are transmitted to a belt-mounted computer that controls fingers individually.
...only to catch suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad, suicide bombings in Baghdad... 

Joints (Giolite knee): A friction-controlled polycentric device is inserted into the joint socket. Its plastic cup works with a metal ball and stem to flex up to 20 degrees.¹³

...her body tells your body about the day’s body count, about the day’s body count, about the day’s body count, about the day’s body count, about the day’s body count, about the day’s body count...

Nerves and muscles (Bion): Radio-powered implant stimulates nerves and muscles, restoring movement to paralyzed limbs.¹⁴

...to hear more on toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime and nation building, toppling the regime.

Muscle (Artificial muscles): These muscles expand and contract as the stuff they’re made of, polypyrrole, generates and conducts electricity.¹⁵

...refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra, refugees caught in crossfire in Basra.

Leg (C-Leg): Sensors in the knee and the shin react to movement and weight distribution up to 50 times per second, adjusting the leg’s position accordingly.¹⁶

...that Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault, Allies intensify air assault.

Bone (Vitoss): Synthetic materials, such as calcium phosphate, replace the marrow, stimulating new bone growth. Helpful in bone-grafting operations.¹⁷

...your body’s mind wanders to the daily news reports while listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast, listening to the buzzing ballast.

Cells (Bionic chip): A microchip regulates the activity of healthy human cells to more effectively administer gene therapy. An external wireless device sends the body’s electrical impulses to the chip, which triggers the cells’ membrane pores to open.¹⁸
The Oxford English Dictionary™ defines "planned obsolescence" as the "obsolescence of manufactured goods due to deliberate changes in design, cessation of the supply of spare parts, use of poor-quality materials, etc."

In a chilling article in a recent issue of WIRED™ magazine (March 2003) science reporter Jennifer Kahn writes about human bodies being used to store human organs. The body is technology is the body. Kent describes a "...dead man's room, [where] a different calculus is unfolding. Here the organ is the patient, and the patient is a mere container, the safest place to store body parts until surgeons are ready to use them. It can be more than a day from the time a donor dies until his organs are harvested—the surgery alone takes hours, not to mention the time needed to do blood tests, match tissue, and fly in special surgical teams for the evisceration. And yet, a heart lasts at most six hours outside the body, even after it has been kneaded, flushed with preservatives, and packed in a cooler. Organs left on ice too long tend to perform poorly in their new environment, and doctors are picky about which viscera they're willing to work with. Even an ailing cadaver is a better container than a cooler." The body is technology is the body is technology is the body...

...reporting the War in Iraq...listening to the latest casualties...reports of collateral damage...suicide bombings in Baghdad...about the day's body count...the toppling of the regime and nation building...refugees caught in crossfire in Basra...allies intensify air assault,...

bla-laul-tualt-toulst-sowout-toud-toudk-tout-ruog-pout-pa, it speaks, speaks, and speaks...

Notes

1 Harper, R. (Sept. 2002). We can rebuild you. WIRED: 54-55.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
What is not said, is often more powerful than what is spoken about diversity, difference, and identity in U.S. classrooms. Examples are everywhere: Although no students of color may be enrolled in a course at a prominent research university, members of the class do not believe there is such a thing as institutional racism. A handful of women are discussed in course textbooks, all authored by men, but no one thinks it odd that only men have written accounts of women’s achievements that appear on the syllabus. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people do not speak for themselves, either, in the context of the course. Sexual orientation is mentioned in class discussions only in sentences that begin “I’m not gay myself, but ....” Other dimensions of students’ and teachers’ identities—age, weight, ability, social class—are not mentioned at all in the “professional” setting of the classroom. Every day, in these and a thousand other ways, silence helps protect the position and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society.
Silence ...

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Absent and Unmarked

There are two forms of silence that protect dominant groups. One is the kind of silence in which people do not speak. People from non-dominant groups may be silent in the sense that they have not created many of the textbooks, news stories, histories, works of art, school curricula, movies, television shows, toys, and other cultural texts that inform our understandings of ourselves and the world. People from non-dominant groups may be completely absent in cultural texts—not represented at all—or may be represented by someone else speaking for them or about them. There may be no Native Americans in a prime time television show, for example, or there may be Native American characters that are constructed by non-Native writers as noble savages, foils for cowboys, and other stereotypes. Either way, whether Native people are omitted or represented in stereotypical ways, only dominant voices are speaking. Other voices are not included.

The absence of other voices in cultural texts helps protect the interests of dominant groups by means of ideological hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). Dominant stories are continually reinforced in the cultural texts that surround us. Over and over again, we see the same stories about what Native Americans are like or what it means to be a man or what constitutes success in life. Other narratives, which might challenge dominant stories or offer viable alternatives, are not widely available. Because other alternatives are not available to us, dominant-hegemonic stories end up seeming natural and normal—the way things "really" are and ought to be.

Whereas one form of silence is an absence of voices, another form of silence lies in the unspoken assumptions on which dominant stories are based. The stories that dominant groups tell about the way things are and ought to be in the world includes more than constructed representations of themselves. Dominant stories also include representations of people who are different: poor people, elderly people, women, people of color, and others. When stories about non-dominant groups are told from dominant perspectives, features of the dominant group are assumed to be natural or normal. Only non-dominant features are noted, or marked in stories that are told from a dominant point of view. Features of dominant groups remain unmarked because they are assumed to be normal—natural—not especially notable or worth mentioning (Derrida, 1976; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). For example, a news headline says “Black man robs local bank.” It does not say “White man robs local bank.” Race is marked in a headline, only when the story concerns a robber who is not White.

Cultural practices of marking and unmarking protect dominant group interests, both by calling attention to some features and by not calling attention to others. Not calling attention to features of dominant groups—unmarking—can also be an effective way to protect privileged social positions. A news headline might say “Police officers arrested on drug charges,” but we do not see “White police officers arrested on drug charges.” Reports of school shootings might be titled “Youth violence.” We do not see “Boys kill classmates.” When race and gender go unmarked, negative behavior can be attributed to larger groups of people: “police officers” or “youth.” Not calling attention to race and gender helps conceal the responsibility of dominant group members behind generalizations.

Philosophy professor, Nancy Tuana (2004), in her discussion of an epistemology of ignorance argues that “ignorance is not simple lack. It is often constructed, maintained, and disseminated and is linked to issues of cognitive authority, doubt, trust, silencing, and uncertainty” (p. 1). “Ignorance—far from being a simple, innocent lack of knowledge—is a complex phenomenon: which, like knowledge is interrelated with power, for example, ignorance is frequently constructed and, it is linked to issues of cognitive authority, trust, doubt, silencing, etc.” (Tuana, 2004, p. 30). How is ignorance constructed in the field of art education? What and who holds authority in the field and what is silenced?
Critical perspectives are based on a premise that there is not a singular reality or history or body of knowledge. An epistemology of knowledge needs to consider what is unmarked and absent. A critical perspective within art education is a critique of hegemonic processes of knowledge creation and the imbalances of privilege and power in relationships within communities. To organize curricula around sets of images or objects, whether popular culture or high art, perpetuates silence by beginning with what exists. What if art curricula centered on what is not represented?

Artwork can provide critical perspectives that encourage viewers to consider power, privilege, and social equity. Emily Chiang, a preservice art education student, in Keifer-Boyd’s visual culture course on the use of technology in art creation, provides an example of critical studio practice. Emily embarked on self-representation through critical practice with video and PowerPoint projection. She challenges, in this work, representations of race as identity markers. (See Figure 1.)

She provokes viewers to rethink, recreate, and rewrite the meanings of blonde and other markers of race. She unmarks categories of race providing a context for “dreaming high”—breaking through obstacles and perceptual biases or stereotypes behind the legacy of power of particular races.

Marking Privilege

Practices of marking grow out of the way people use oppositions to construct meaning in the languages (including images) through which we understand the world (Derrida, 1976). We understand masculinity, for example, by conceiving it as the opposite of femininity. We construct White as the opposite of Black. These binary oppositions are not neutral linguistic categories; they reflect social relationships of power and privilege. “[A]ll binary oppositions are encoded with values and concepts of power, superiority, and worth. Hence the category of the norm is always set up in opposition to that which is deemed abnormal or aberrant in some way (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 104). Frequently the norm is unmarked in words, images, and other forms of language, whereas opposites of the norm—the supposed abnormalities or deviations from what is normal—are marked as categories in the languages through which we understand the world.

This practice of marking opposites, and the way marking helps protect social privilege, are apparent in the language we use to understand diversity in education. Someone mentions gender in relation to education, and we think of women. Someone says “race,” and we think of African Americans, Asian Americans, or Native Americans. We conceive social class in terms of poor and working people. “Sexual orientation” means gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered people. In the ways we think about diversity in theory and incorporate it in practice through teaching, we usually do not include categories such as male, European, wealthy, and heterosexual. Typically, such categories of norm and privilege go unmarked in constructions of diversity, equity, and justice in American education.
One strategy for breaking this unmarked form of silence in education is to pay attention to categories such as male, European, wealthy, and heterosexual—i.e., to mark these categories, too, in our thinking and practice. In our classrooms, we can encourage students to examine how categories of privilege are socially constructed, along with categories such as female, Native, poor, and gay. In teaching courses on art and visual culture, Amburgy has had students consider constructions of masculinity, for example, by examining representations of men in movies, television shows, works of art, advertisements, children’s toys, and other forms of visual culture. To help underscore the constructed nature of these representations, her students look at more than a single text. They examine pairs or multiple texts. For example, students recently considered the way two children’s toys, G.I. Joe and Ken, represent masculinity. Students examined, not only the messages conveyed by each toy about what it means to be a man, but also the subject positions offered to children by each of the toys. Whereas G.I. Joe is addressed to boys, Ken is addressed to girls. G.I. Joe is an action figure; Ken is a doll.

**Artists Deconstructing Absence**

Can humans unmark categories and create their own identity? If color and gender, as cultural markers, are performatively produced (see Butler, 1990; Blocker, 1999; Barratt & Stryker, 1998), can we redefine our identity, or does our cultural template and social context overpower individual determination to represent self? We discuss here artists who deconstruct the codification of their physical bodies into societal conscripted categories. Deconstruction, as Derrida (1988) describes it, is not an analysis, critique, or method toward a singular understanding. Artists, discussed here, deconstruct codifications by beginning where they experience themselves situated in societal codes of power and privilege. Deconstruction is the event from which reconstruction can be imagined. This reconstruction, in the works of Ana Mendieta, María Magdalena Compos-Pons, Alucquère R. Stone, and Virginia Barratt and Beth Stryker’s collaborative work, described below, involves what postcolonial theorists (Dimitriadis & McCarthy, 2001) refer to as double coding. That is, the combination of two or more fields of reference in a given work is a strategy used to collapse the master narrative (Jencks, 1996) in order to visualize difference as community. This postcolonial art strategy is envisioned in CyberHouse, which concludes this section.

The absence of self-representations is, in Ana Mendieta’s case, the subject of her art. Thus as subject she exerts her presence through a visible absence, unmarked by societal inscriptions. Interventions in cultural marking by artists are productive in exposing what is unmarked, as well as, what is absent from portrayals of humanity. Presence and absence, a theme in the work of Ana Mendieta, is an “aesthetic of disappearance.” An aesthetic of disappearance is when the artist as subject is represented only in his/her absence by impressions or other “enigmatic remainders which speak of disease and mortality” (Smith, 1996, p. 2).

Mendieta’s **Siluetas** are dug-out female forms in the earth filled with ignited gunpowder. There are few documents of these performances. In 1981, Mendieta combined a black and white photograph of the ash remains of one *Silueta* with an 1817 written account of a Cuban legend, *La Venus Negra*. The legend serves as a “marker for a gap in the collective memory of the conquering race” (Blocker, 1999, p. 118). The genocide of the Siboney Indians had occurred long before the colonizing Spaniards created the enduring legend of a Black woman survivor. The Black Venus according to the nineteenth century legend was “an example of perfect feminine beauty,” who passively protested, through starvation, the civilizing/colonializing efforts of the Spaniards (Blocker, 1999, p. 117).

Jane Blocker (1999, pp. 113–136) explores the multiple-coded postcolonial art strategies that Mendieta uses in her narrative juxtaposition that unmarks essentialized categories of woman,
Blackness, and nature. Blocker's analysis brings to light that color (as an identity category), when displaced as Mendieta does in her retelling of the Black Venus legend, acquires meaning through the body movement from one context to another. The woman's skin color is marked "Black" when she is forcefully moved into White colonialization. The legend describes her Black skin as the color of the black earth, thus the colonializers' inability to contain the Black Venus symbolizes the colonializers' fear of nature, women, and otherness. When she escapes, her power lives in her elusiveness to captivity. This is similar to the ephemeral "smoking" female form in the Siluetas performance in which the documentation of ashes, a symbol of body transformation, suggests the movement from the physical absence of body (the hallowed earth) through a metaphysical smoke, to a materialized body of ash.

Mendieta, born in Cuba of White European heritage, was marked non-White within a racist context of being a Cuban exile and a United States citizen. Mendieta's light skin was marked as Black. Blocker (1999) interprets Mendieta's performative use of the Venus Negra legend coupled with a document of a Silueta as "a desire, not for inclusion, which would mean racial and cultural assimilation, but for difference" (p. 127). Like the Black Venus, this difference is her power to not be essentialized or marked by race or nation categories. Such purposeful unmarking in this artwork, that is not a given by being of the dominant group, empowers through the deconstruction of fixed categories for the reconstruction of a counter-narrative in which Blackness becomes an elusive concept.

Black Cuban artist, Maria Magdalena Compos-Pons's 1991 artwork, La verdad no mata (The Truth Doesn't Kill You) is a critique of societal processes that promote self-erasure for those bodies marked "other" by, in bell hooks's words, "a political system of imperialist, white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 2000, p. xiv). In La verdad no mata, Compos-Pons represents her body in multicolored triplicate silhouettes of black, white and yellow. The three figures represent a transformation as Compos-Pons emerges from her Black body to assume the ideal of female beauty, light skin. La verdad no mata represents the destruction of the two original bodies, "the black and the white (or negative) have mixed and produced the mulatto (or in this case, mulatta) whose ambiguity in society ranges from being ostracized by both black and white, to being glamorized as an exotic lover who combines a lighter skin with the exotic appeal of African Sexuality" (Goldman, 1995, p. 76). Compos-Pons's work represents a three-way crossroad bringing together three women with embroiled histories. A hatchet embedded in the back of the yellow figure causes a black heart to burst from her chest implying "a step in any one racial location puts different things at stake" (Harris, 2003, p. 180). La verdad no mata articulates the advantages of Whiteness and the complications of miscegenation as a consequence of colonial color marking, where "the visual body was used by those in power to represent non-visual realities that differentiate insiders from outsiders" (Harris, 2003, p. 2).

Allucquere R. Stone presents the story of the virtual persona, Julie Graham, a disfigured, mute, paraplegic female psychiatrist. Stone (1995) suggests in the retelling of this real event in virtual space that these "complex virtual identities are real and productive interventions into our cultural belief that the unmarked social unit, besides being White and male, is a single self in a single body" (p. 75). The reality is witnessed in that "Julie's unmasking as a construct was emotionally devastating to the many women who were unforgiving of the deception when they found that Julie, whom they had trusted and confided, was a speaking, mobile man (p. 78). Stone challenges the "Western industrialized cultural assumptions ... that subjectivity is invariably constituted in relation to a physical substrate—that social beings, people, exist by virtue of possessing biological bodies through which their existence is warranted in the body politic" (p. 65).
Stone, in her explorations of identity constructions both online and offline, emphasizes that it is through “prosthetic” communication of one’s physicality that identities are crafted. The discursive prosthetic, Stone (1995) suggests, overcomes in cyberspace an absence of markers. Female and Black, for instance, can be used in cyberspace as markers to maintain the unmarking of male and White. Stone describes cyberself forays that are “stereotypical and Cartesian” interactions: “reifying old power differentials whose workings are familiar” (p. 36). But by marking the absence she has also generated interactions that are “novel, strange, perhaps transformative, and certainly disruptive of many traditional attempts at categorization” (p. 36).

Similar to Blocker’s interpretation of color in Mendieta’s work, as an identity marker, formed through movement in and out of various contexts, Stone’s identity transformations, work both online and offline because of the movement between the expectations or essentialization of body markers within a communicative situation. Language codes, such as Black, construct a reality in which a White-skinned body, such as Mendieta’s can be marked as other with the designation of being “Black.” Stone deconstructs the discursive construction of reality, and from this exposing of how human interaction constructs reality, she reconstructs her gender. Successfully changing from the unmarked person of a White male relies on the discursive markings of female and/or color.

CrosSeXXXaminations, conceptually constructed by Barratt and Stryker (1998) and first shown as part of a site-specific installation at Artspace Gallery, Sydney, Australia, in 1998, is Web art that in order to see it one needs to interact with the piece. Some students find it uncomfortable and quickly terminate what teeters between natural and unnatural communication for them. Others, who enter, report that they begin to feel uncertain about human normalcy. The computer program is a disembodied examiner, which is discomforting in this lack of

marked presence. Machine intelligence, programmed by humans, attend to what is perceived as normal to fool humans that the artificial intelligence can pass as human. In CrosSeXXXaminations, the computer-mediated exchanges between those who enter the Web site and the programmed examiner, destabilizes nature and normal codes. When the examiner asks questions that go beyond the boundaries of heterosexuality in everyday discourse and visual culture. Deconstruction, in CrosSeXXXaminations, begins with the discursive and lived events that codify what is perceived as normal at this moment in time, in order to unmark queer identity as diseased or perverted subjects.

In CyberHouse, a Web-based game in development, both recognizing that which is unmarked and perpetually displacing markings are the strategies for self-representation. These strategies have theoretical roots in Diane Elam’s (1994) concept of groundless solidarity. Elam uses the term “infinite displacement” to describe a deferral of common ground, i.e., a groundless solidarity. This concept pedagogically functions in CyberHouse to disrupt the notion that there is a natural foundation. However, since consequences for choices about self-representation are part of the game, the embodiment of physical markings that make each person both unique and of one human race are not dismissed. Rather than forming stolen identities marketed as unmarked and desirous in most role-play games, CyberHouse’s game plan is the assemblage of a space from the choices a player makes concerning self-representation. The choices or actions inform the created environments with the subjectivity of the player, creating what Keith Moxey (2001) refers to as “autobiographical self-fictions” (p. 142). CyberHouse is a metaphor for “body” that one enters virtually to explore one’s representation and to participate in self-representation. This is the first segment of the game, i.e., making choices that result in
environments that represent participants' worldviews. In CyberHouse, perpetual displacement is programmed in the interface design by placing the participants' constructions of self in new contexts according to the choices they make. This is similar to Derrida's (2002) notion of grafting and structure of doubling/mirroring in which every placement suggests the possibility of its own displacement. The metaphorical mirror journeys in CyberHouse involve critique of dominant culture framing of race, gender, and other visible markers.

**Eracism: Constructing Absence**

Eracism is the slogan of the group ERACE formed in the summer of 1993 in New Orleans. The goal of ERACE is to foster dialogue between people of all races and, ultimately, to erase racism (ERACE, 2000). ERACE's bumper sticker campaign "Eracism" and first activity sending the message to people that they are not alone in caring about racism, was the impetus for the following discourse on erasure as an act of racism.

Despite the huge body of evidence on racism, racial prejudice and discrimination, racism is commonly denied in American society and its educational institutions. There are those who would argue that racism exists only within isolated instances of racists' behavior, or the acts of extremist groups, resulting in strong opposition to the position that racism is deeply embedded in the social landscape of American culture.

Erasure as an attempt to silence can be noted throughout history, and specifically as is played out in American schools and classrooms and within institutions of higher education. If "knowledge is power" and various forms of knowledge are provided or withheld according to the position one occupies in society, the question one might consider is whose knowledge is transmitted and whose knowledge is omitted or silenced through the curriculum.

The so called "modern classical curriculum" or Great Books of the Western World (Hutchins, 1952), a revision of the Harvard Classics (Eliot, 1909-1910), contains ideas and stories that have shaped modern civilization. For example, Hegel, one of the philosophers whose work is included in the Great Books of the Western World, wrote, "Africa... is not a historical part of the world; it has no movements or developments to exhibit.... That is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European world.... Egypt will be considered in reference to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African spirit" (Hegel quoted in Carruthers, 1995, p. 99). Clearly, Hegel's objective was to "remove Egypt from Africa and Africans from Egypt" (Carruthers, 1995, p. 34) through his assertions that African culture was no part of history. The celebrated Great Books excluded texts from areas of Africa not colonialized by Europeans at the time the texts were authored. The omission of African texts from both canons of the European education and literature curriculum is very telling, particularly in light of the fact that African scholars made significant contributions prior to the 18th century. Many texts from the ancient Nile Valley Civilization and early Ethiopian period of history were on hand and available for inclusion (Carruthers, 1995).

Art history texts are important in that they shape our conception of the world and its people. For example, many art history texts and scholars describe ancient Egypt as the most fascinating of ancient civilizations and marvel at the beauty of its art and architecture. Though Egyptian civilization developed along the river Nile, in Eastern Africa, and African centered studies have clearly demonstrated that early Egypt's origins were African, art history texts and teachings discount and largely ignore Egypt's connection to Africa, presenting African history, if at all, in episodes and fragments. As a consequence, students do not gain from school curricula a full sense of descendants of Africans in their evolution or the history of Africans in the African Diaspora...
Schooled in Silence

Hilliard, Payton-Stewart, & Williams, 1990). Silence in the curriculum lends itself to students not having a sense that the descendents of African people are scattered throughout the world in India, Fiji, Brazil, and the Philippines.

Discourses of denial or silence are also situated in Egyptian artifacts and archaeology as many have being defaced and destroyed. Why are the noses and lips chiseled off or removed from many of the Egyptian sculptures, erasing the legacy of African people and a Blackness negatively defined by Europeans? (See Figure 2.)

As noted by scholar Runoko Rashidi, the entire Egyptian Dynastic Era (age of Pharaohs) men and women with Black skin, full lips, and tightly curled hair, “were dominant in the general population and governing elite” (Rashidi, 1998/2000, ¶ 1). The late Senegalese scholar and world’s leading Egyptologist, Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop, employed scientific methodologies to substantiate African foundations through:

- examination of the epidermis of the mummies of Egyptian kings and pharaohs for verification of their melanin content; precise osteological measurements and meticulous studies in the various relevant areas of anatomy and physical anthropology; careful examination and comparison of modern Upper Egyptian and West African blood types; detailed Afro-Egyptian studies and the collaboration of distinct Afro-Egyptian cultural traits; documents of racial designation employed by the early Africans themselves; biblical testimonies and references that address ancient Egyptian’s ethnicity, race, and culture; and writings of early Greek and Roman travelers and scholars describing the physical characteristics of the ancient Egyptians. (Rashidi, 1998/2000, ¶ 3)


What accounts for the 20th-century omissions? One can conclude that the “curriculum was designed to erase a significant portion of world history” (Carruthers, 1995, p. 32). What if history is lost, forgotten, silenced, hidden, denied, or erased? What happens when a society erases and replaces knowledge? What happens to a society that does not know its past? Does history become just that, “his”story, White, western male and middle class perspective?

The hidden curriculum, a term credited to Edgar Z. Friedenberg in the 1960s, brought attention to the fact that children learn more in school than that which is included in the formal curriculum. Moreover, Henry Giroux (1983) suggests the hidden curriculum sends messages both through “form and content of school knowledge” and through
the "silences" of what is left out. While most scholars consider the hidden curriculum as the unintended outcomes of the schooling process (McLaren, 1989), we believe it is important to understand that the hidden curriculum can be deliberate. In this case—erasing the African context of Egyptian art—the deliberate purpose of the hidden curriculum is to silence some while articulating and transmitting powerful narratives from others.

**Breaking the Silence in 21st-Century Art Education**

We can help break the silence by asking students to identify visual culture that maintains race and gender privilege. Dolls are good examples. Dolls are important in popular culture as they transmit subtle messages to young children affecting self-esteem and self-image. Wanda Knight recalls growing up never having seen a Black doll. All the dolls were White; all had long straight hair. Studies by Clark and Clark, in 1939 and 1947, revealed an overwhelming preference by Black children for White dolls over Black ones (Harris, 2003). The studies showed the children's associations of good with White and bad with Black were indicators of poor self-image.

White identity has been and continues to be reinforced in various ways. The standard White doll image can be seen in millions of homes and now can be seen in millions more as the U.S. Postal Services in 1997 issued a set of fifteen stamps called Classic American Dolls. (See Figure 3.) "American Child" (the doll in the upper right hand corner of the stamps) was featured on the cover of the April 3, 1939, edition of Life magazine. The doll was designed by Dwees Cochran who based the head of the doll on what she saw as being typical of "American" children: blonde with northern European features. The message is clear—White is the American standard. This standardization is reinforced repeatedly in American popular culture and media as "white power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular" (Dyer, 1988, p. 44). Thus, White is unmarked. What would the world LOOK like with such privilege dismantled? Art educators might approach this question with their students by changing the doll stamps so that privilege is marked, silences or erasures of people are made visible, and stereotypical markings are removed.

![Figure 3. 1997 U.S. Postal Service Stamps Classic American Dolls](image)

We can listen to silence, look for the unmarked and erased. This is a critical approach. Education has never been, and can never be a value-free enterprise. Values are taught by the curricular choices, the pedagogical approaches used, and most critically by that which is absent and/or unmarked. If not exposed for its impact on eroding democracy, silence is a powerful and dangerous educational practice, whether institutionalized in schools or transmitted through public pedagogy (i.e., the teachings from surrounding events and signs). A participatory democracy involves individual citizens participating in "those social decisions determining the quality and direction of their lives" (Isserman & Kazin, 2000, p. 169).
Democracy is the responsibility of all, and it is through education that this responsibility is learned and practiced. Visual culture study from a social theory perspective asks: How does the visual context support or demise liberty and justice for all? We can encourage students to envision the future, discuss democratic values, and ask if democratic values such as political inclusiveness, social equality, economic justice, and personal autonomy are evident in everyday, popular, and pervasive visual culture. What would our surroundings, relationships, world—i.e., our visual culture—look like if imbued with democratic values? Re-present and re-create the existing visuality of the world to convey democratic values and in the process explore one's beliefs about democratic principles and practices.

Democracy, including basics such as voting rights, and legal equality, will continue to erode in the United States, as well as the world due to the United States imperialist cultural, political, and economic power, if educators do not actively infuse their disciples with democratic principles and practices. For there to be justice and equality FOR ALL, educators need to teach the next generations to expose the unmarked, re-envision how they are marked, reveal what is absent, and critique the prevalent cultural stories in visual culture.

*Author's Note: This is a true co-authored work with equal contributions from all of us and no first author. The order in which we list authors is based on a rotation we use in our collaborations on publications.

References


African Art: What and to Whom? Anxieties, Certainties, Mythologies

David Gall

It has taken nearly a whole century to publish two books on African art that recognize the continent as a complex cultural unit within which there is diversity, *A History of Art in Africa* (Blackmun Visona, M., et al, 2001) and *Africa, The Art of a Continent* (Phillips, T. 1995). Why has it taken so long for North and East Africa past and present to be included in texts labeled African art? Why were they not recognized as African? India, also a place of diversity of race and ethnicity, has not been similarly treated. The assumptions underlying the norms retarding such a representation of Africa were deeply rooted, their influence on scholarship related to African art and culture was profound and, even if attenuated at present, persistent. They have impacted on the organization of information related to Africa, influencing from library cataloging, the content of texts and videos, to museum layout and exhibitions. Only by becoming conscious of the pervasive power of this “hidden curriculum” can we take steps to counter its influence. Those underlying assumptions are symptomatic of European fears and desires related to African identity.

Why has that anxiety persisted for so long, and what has caused it to wane so that finally these texts could appear? What ideological and other forces were at work that determined the pace of change? What “new” dilemmas are replacing, or being added to (complicating, obscuring, weakening) the old? Are the old dilemmas taking new forms? What is the significance of such questions and their possible answers to art education?

Early Anthropology, Race, and Europe’s Modern Anxiety over Africa

The European anxiety over African identity was generated by its modern colonial and oppressive relationship to Africans in the old and new worlds. The need to construct European identity as essentially superior to all others was so powerful that it was imperative to remove any suggestion of civilizing influence of Africans or any other on European culture; and divest Africans generally, but black Africans particularly, of individuality and reflexivity. This is why Diop’s (1974) assertion of an African origin of civilization, and Bernal’s (1988) contention that modern historiography has been thoroughly penetrated and compromised by racism and continental chauvinism is deeply disturbing to the academic status quo.

If I am right in urging the overthrow of the Aryan Model and its replacement by the Revised Ancient one, it will be necessary not only to rethink the fundamental bases of ‘Western Civilization’ but also to recognize the penetration of racism and ‘continental chauvinism’ into all our historiography, or philosophy of writing history. The Ancient Model had no major ‘internal’ deficiencies, or weaknesses in explanatory power. It was overthrown for external reasons. For 18th- and 19th-century Romantics and racists it was simply intolerable for Greece, which was seen not merely as the epitome of Europe but also as its pure childhood, to have been the result of a mixture of native Europeans and colonizing Africans and Semites. Therefore, the Ancient Model had to be overthrown and replaced by something more acceptable. (Italics in the original, p.2)
Even scholars such as Wallis Budge (1973), who regarded ancient Egypt as essentially an African culture, made sure that his readers understood that it was inferior to Greece and Europe.

In order to achieve the second imperative Egypt and North Africa had to be culturally and racially removed from any influence or relation to black Africa. Here the science of Anthropology was pivotal in that it devised the categories of race. There is little doubt today that the racial categories of the nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropologists were conceived to legitimate the racial and ethnic apartheid hierarchies that imperial European powers needed to affirm their superiority (Diop, 1974, Bernal, 1988.). African culture identified with Negroes, pagan religions, and “tribes,” could be distinguished from North African cultures identified with Hamites and Semites. Its religions could be distinguished from world religions, especially monotheistic ones, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Its cultures were regarded as primitive rather than civilized and developed. In the racial hierarchy that prevailed black Africans, categorized as Negroes, were at the bottom of the ladder, correlated inevitably with “the masses,” intuitiveness, the collective unconscious. The majority of European scholars were persuaded by the “objectivity” of the convenient racial categories erected by early anthropological “science.” The most civilized black person was nevertheless beneath the most uncivilized white person. Combined with gender hierarchy this placed black women on the lowest rung of humanity. Altogether the black person stood precariously above the category of higher animals such as apes. As this was a structure erected to serve Europe’s imperial ambitions nothing in it anticipated the impact of “Negro” African visual-manipulative forms on European artists and culture.

Art history in Ascendance

In the first decade of the 20th century the conceptions of ‘typical’ Africans as uncultured underwent a radical change that influenced how African visual-manipulative forms were represented in texts. I am referring specifically to the impact of African objects, among others, on European artists of the early 20th century. This affected a revaluation of African objects in the eyes of European scholars. A pivotal moment in Euro-American attitudes towards works of African Culture was the Museum of Modern Art’s show of African art. The catalogue’s essay by J. J. Sweeney (1935), providing the requisite socio-historical background of the show to its viewers, lays bare the tension between his discipline and that of the “scholars of African culture,” anthropologists and ethnologists.

Anthropologists and ethnologists in their works had completely overlooked (or at best had only mentioned perfunctorily) the aesthetic qualities in the artifacts of primitive peoples. . . . It was not the scholar who discovered Negro art to European taste but the artists. And the artists did so with little more knowledge of the objects’ provenance or former history than in what junk shop they had been lucky enough to find it and whether the dealer had a dependable supply. (p. 12)

Sweeney is certain where the “new” value for African objects resides.

In the end, however, it is not the tribal characteristics of Negro art nor its strangeness that are interesting. It is its plastic qualities. Picturesque or exotic features as well as historical and ethnographic considerations have a tendency to blind us to its true worth. (Sweeney J. 1935, p.21)

In short, you do not need the knowledge provided by the scholars on African culture to aesthetically appreciate “Negro” art; it is accessible to all. Sweeney is certain that the true worth of “Negro” art lies in its plastic qualities.
Doubtful that Europeans could ever fully understand the "psychological content" of African art, he was nevertheless aware that the major obstacle to understanding "black" African art was the deep prejudice existing that denied black Africa any serious contribution to human civilization. The prejudice Sweeney had to combat assumed as fact the idea that the person of black African origin was savage, without history and culture of any sophistication, bereft almost entirely of intelligence and creativity. Sweeney does his best to contradict such notions by informing his readers of the great Negro kingdoms, Ghana, Songhai, and Benin.

To inform us of the racial and cultural composition of peoples of Africa he relies, nevertheless, on the current categories constructed or used by the "scholars," the said ones that were blind to the powerful aesthetic qualities of Negro African art. Thus Sweeney confidently tells us "the population of the African continent may be divided into five main stocks: Libyan, Hamite, Himyartite (Semite), Negro and Bushman, exclusive of the modern European population and the Indian and Chinese introduced by them" (Sweeney, 1935, p. 17). The exhibition and catalogue did nothing to counter the dominant assumption that Egypt and North Africa could, indeed should, not be thought of as black and African. Black Africa's inscription in other African identities could not be recognized; just as the terms Latino or Hispanic tends to make invisible the Afro Hispanic presence in Spanish speaking cultures of the Americas, so too were the racial categories created to distance "Negroes" from "civilization." What the elevation of black African visual manipulative forms to high value did reinforce was the ascertainment of intuitiveness and emotionality to black persons as an essential trait, reserving for white people, men especially, rationality and self-control.

For some African intellectuals, typified by the Negritude movement, this was at last recognition of their different essential strength. However, while some black and African artists and intellectuals may have been elated by such "recognition," some black scientists were not. It is not surprising that it was Diop (1964), a scientist, who exposed the spurious objectivity and racist motives behind early anthropology's racial categories.

Such is the opinion of the Frenchman Joseph de Gobineau, precursor of Nazi philosophy, who in his famous book On the Inequality of Human Races decrees that the artistic sense is inseparable from Negro blood; but he reduces art to an inferior manifestation of human nature: ... Frequently Blacks of high intellectual attainment remain so victimized by this alienation that they seek in all good faith to codify those Nazi ideas in an alleged duality of the sensitive, emotional Negro, creator of art, and the White Man, especially endowed with rationality. (p.25)

It was imperative for Diop that black Africans should realize they are no less rational, capable of objectivity and science, than any other group of people. The essentialist apportioning of reason and intuition to racial and gender constituencies could only keep black cultures under the supervision of European power. The motivation behind such structures is to make sure that European culture was substantially uninfluenced by any other and above all others. Non-European cultures can supply raw material, but European culture transforms and elevates it.

The claim that some ineffable quality is added to imported techniques, concepts or aesthetic styles often occurs in culturally peripheral nations like England, Germany, Japan, Korea or Vietnam. Cultural pride needs to be maintained in the face of foreign borrowing that is so massive that it cannot be denied, or where borrowings run counter to a hierarchy of cultural or 'racial' superiority. (Bernal 1988, p.198)
Bernal make the above statement in speaking about European perceptions of themselves as the progressive culture. Not surprisingly for the rational limb of European art, modern criticism and history, it was the modern European artist who, not as heirs, but as transformers, carried forward African knowledge to great new heights, as only Europeans could do, not Africans of the old or new worlds.

The early 20th century texts and the change they represent on the one hand leave untouched the racial assumptions about Africans, while on the other they further a positive change in the value of Black African visual manipulative objects, but essentially in formalist terms that would prove unsatisfactory to Afrocentrists and European anthropologists. The former seem to have no impact on African art history text: hardly ever referred to, they are marginalized. The latter have an increasingly big impact and generally are certain the formalist emphasis imposes European meaning on African art, dismissing what it meant or means to its creators; in other words devaluing their reasons for making objects.

There are several issues we need to be mindful of at this juncture. The formalist aesthetic elevates in one way but restricts in another the representations of Africa in art history texts. Also, we should be wary of assuming that the polarization of formal against contextual frames of interpretation is as necessary as they are represent to be by the historians and curators on one hand, and on the other the anthropologists who emphasize the social context. Finally, the relationship of the “mainstream” to marginalized Afrocentric scholarship underscores the different value given to the issues of race and rationality, and it is itself an undervaluing of African rationality and capacity to determine what's in the best interest of Africans.

Well into the nineteen eighties the status quo on the division of African culture into north and south of the Sahara remained in force along with its racial categories of justification. About the same time the tussle between the historian/curators and anthropologist had turned more favorable to the latter. The formalism of the historian/curators ceased to be convincing and a new cadre of art historians more sympathetic but not fully converted to the anthropological position came on the scene. They were not all of one persuasion on the north south divide, yet were uniform in their substantial exclusion of North African cultures from their texts on African art.

Willett (1971, p. 109-115), even thought willing to acknowledge Ancient Egypt to be perhaps African in the racial sense, and definitely so in the cultural sense, was unwilling or perhaps unable to include ancient Egypt and North Africa in any substantial way. Six pages out of 288 are devoted to Egypt, in which the only visual evidence you see of Egypt are 3 illustrations of prehistoric art in a text on African art that aims to correct misconceptions of African art. Evidently, the misconception in most urgent need of correction is the formalist exclusion of the cultural context of African art. The value that African subjects give to African objects is critical, but the attribution of complex thought to Africans, which later some ethnologist and anthropologist were willing to concede, did not necessarily imply, nor secure recognition of equal rationality. Indeed, the assumptions of the childlike irrationality of the “primitive” and “tribesman” persisted well into the latter part of the 20th Century. The following statement from no less an authority than E. H. Gombrich (1972) was not only typical, it helped to make such attitudes pervasive.

It is very much as if children played at pirates or detectives till they no longer knew where play-acting ended and reality began. But with children there is always the grown-up world about them, the people who tell them ‘Don’t be noisy‘, or ‘It is nearly bed-time‘. For the primitive there is no such other world to spoil the illusion, because the members of the tribe take part in the
ceremonial dances and rites with their fantastic games of pretence. They have all learned their significance from former generations and are so absorbed in them that they have little chance of stepping outside it and seeing their behavior critically. (p. 23)

This is from his text The Story of Art now in its sixteenth edition. With such attitudes so persistent, to ignore the anxiety of African people over the issue of rationality because it was conveniently deemed the irrational unscholarly emotional vomit of extreme Afrocentrists, not only was a poor excuse, it was symptomatic of insensitivity to African feelings on that issue. We have to keep in mind that the institutionalized exclusion of Africans of the Americas from opportunities and recognition as artists was sustained, at least in part, by a combination of the tight tethering of aesthetic notions to race with an apartheid hierarchy that used the geographical interval to keep African creativity and intelligence potent only “over there” and confined to “back then?”

Bascom (1973), Brain (1980), Gillon (1991), Seiber and Walker (1987) to name a few, sustain the divide by a refusal to include North Africa in their texts. Gillon’s book, A Short History of African Art, includes Nubia, and is quite informative otherwise, but he too keeps North Africa and Egypt out. Bascom (1973) does not share Willett’s (1971) opinion on the place of North Africa in a text on African Art. He is unequivocal: “The validity of excluding Egypt, Ethiopia, North Africa, and the Sahara is particularly evident in the realm of art. These four areas belong to a different world of art and, except in very remote times, the influence they have had on sub-Saharan African art has been largely negative” (P. 27). This is after he states that “Culturally the affinities of this large region are predominantly to the north and east, rather than to the south” (P.27). Brain (1980) is still convinced of the racial categories of the imperial era, therefore he can write

Among the Bororo Fulani any temptation to settle in villages is countered by an intensive propaganda to encourage a confidence in the beauty of their way of life, bolstered by a pride in Fulani racial characteristics. They have an aesthetic of the body, which has helped them retain their particular Mediterranean features to a remarkable extent. Young mothers massage the crania of their babies as if to model them into the desired shape-a kind of elongated sphere. They also manipulate the nose, as if they are trying to make it long and thin, giving it an elegant, aristocratic (non-Negroid) line with the forehead. (P. 55)

There are several points we must note. First there is no distinction made between race and ethnicity. This is a conflation quite congruent with, but not exclusive to, essentialist ideas that see culture as a “genetic” product of racial characteristics; many writers are not careful to make such a distinction recognizing the separate influences of somatic and cultural factors in identity construction. Nor is there any sense that North and East African cultures, and Middle Eastern ones, are racial and ethnic mixtures. How can we account for the persistent use of such categories? Eugenia Shanklin (1994) attributes it to silence on the issue of race by anthropologists.

It was not always the case that anthropologists dealt summarily with the concept of race; from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1940’s and 1950’s, the study of human races preoccupied scientists, and many ideas were put forth that we now see as erroneous, biased, or bigoted. In the 1960’s, the notion of race as a valid physical or biological category was denounced by leading anthropologists and, by about 1975, discussions of race had disappeared from most anthropology textbooks. This silence has enhanced confusion about a concept that remains current in the popular imagination, one often used to justify social and legal decisions as if its scientific basis were fully established. (p.15)
The popular imagination referred to certainly includes historians of African art who continued to use the erroneous, biased and bigoted racial categories. Silence on the part of European anthropologists was complicit with the perpetuation of the categories created by their predecessors. But then whose self-esteem was at risk.

Even more indicative of the inertia of these ideas is the 1988 translation and publication of Rene Wassing’s (1988) *African Art: Its background and traditions*. Originally published in 1968 in Rotterdam, Wassing’s text not only sustains the north south divide, but also reproduces the racial categories of the 19th century. Amazingly it was deemed a text so important that it was worth reproducing for an English speaking audience? The motivation behind the text, like the author mentioned above, is to place black African art in its cultural context. He is at pains to distinguish the African conception of ‘artist’ from that “as we know it.” Individuals are certainly recognized in African culture “but the leitmotiv is function, the purpose of an object, rather than a standard of criticism founded on purely aesthetic principles, though these may not be lacking altogether” (Wassing, 1988, p. 1).

The “as we know it” signals the inextricability of the concept “art” from Western meaning European and Euro-American dominated social contexts. Wassing would have us assume that there is something coherent in the concept “art” for Western cultures, when in fact it is riddled with contradictions, especially in these latter days in which modernist notions have been severely contested by avant-garde initiatives to liberate the concept from the turn in meaning given to it by art institutions. The avant-garde’s failure and the triumph of institutions and the institutional theory expose the real purpose of maintaining the term art: since objects in themselves are not art but become so by socio-cultural institutional determination, the important question is who will determine which objects and events are deserving of the cultural reverence bequeathed by the label art? Those most empowered in this respect are critics, curators, and art historians, the wordsmiths in the art business. It is interesting that neither traditional African objects, which were not art, nor European ones which are art, can do without the mediation of those empowered to designate inclusion or exclusion from art. That Africans did not have a concept of art (until Europeans came along), and Europeans have an untroubled one (or had until Africans came along), is not what is at stake, what is at stake is authority to determine value. Once the ordained institutionalized rituals have been performed passage from object to art is secured. The demarcation of the difference in this case is more for maintaining racial and cultural hierarchy than for telling us about African or European visual manipulative objects.

The resilience of the category “art” can be traced in part to the desire to maintain a civilized and superior modern West over Africa, the archetypal antithesis of modern civilization. Hence the need for Wassing to remind his readers of how “severely functional” African art is, and why “without it’s collective cultural background it is scarcely understood”(p.1). This function of the category “art” has not escaped the notice of some scholars. McGaffey (1998) referring to the same observation made by Mitchel (1986), states in agreement,

Domestic debates about the nature of art thus implicitly serve to define our civilization in contrast to others. Art itself has an ambiguous position in this play of judgments: although as image it is inferior to, and subversive of, the authoritative word, it participates in the superiority of our civilization over those, which by definition are incapable of art. Or perhaps we should say art criticism. (p.222)

McGaffey titles his essay “Magic, or as we usually say, Art:” A Framework for comparing European and African art. That art depends on institutionally sanctioned belief, like the “magic” attributed to primitive and pre-modern uncivilized societies, has not escaped him. “Art” rescues European objects so labeled from the derogatory sense of the
irrationality associated with the word magic. When attributed to African objects the relation between the art not-art-ness of the objects remains to remind us all of the hierarchy involved between the two cultures, and of the basic rationality and irrationality of their members. To understand how the interplay of art/not-art and rationality/irrationality affects art history texts we must look more closely at anthropology and the scholars of African art.

**Anthropology and the Mind of Africa.**

Within the field of anthropology there was a desire to know what African objects meant to their makers and users. The cultural context in which they were produced was the focus of anthropological and ethnographic investigation. In fact, the anthropologists assumed unlike Sweeney that perhaps it is possible to understand the African mind. They might have been driven by imperial motives, but it nevertheless resulted in an attempt to understand African culture(s) and in being better informed about ideas they held. The studies conducted by Marcel Griaule (1965) and his team is well-known examples of the insight and understanding that can be gained from anthropology. But, they are exemplary too of some of its blindness, and have been criticized from diverse perspectives that include European and African critics. Their researches will serve as an occasion for me to examine the issues provoked by anthropology and of the uses to which it has been put in texts on African art history and culture.

Griaule (1965, and Griaule and Dieterlen, 1986) and his research team found that the Dogon and related groups such as the Bamana (Bambara) possessed a complex cosmology expressed in a mythology that, he and his team believed, structured every facet of their existence, and therefore could be used to explain the significance of art objects and other aspects of the culture of these groups. The basic thrust of the criticism of the Griaule School as far as its relationship to art is concerned is captured very well by Kate Ezra (1988).

To some critics, Griaule’s is too idealized a view of Dogon culture, lacking the irregularities and texture of real life. To others, his conclusions appear to be based on a limited number of Dogon collaborators, like Ogotemmeli, whose individual perceptions of Dogon culture may not always be shared by others in their ethnic group. The Griaule School has been criticized for its lack of historical consciousness in treating Dogon society as a timeless, unchanging entity. The mythological system described by Griaule and Dieterlen may not be the coherent network of correspondences they claim it to be, for some readers have found internal contradictions and inconsistencies that make the system less useful as an interpretive tool. Finally, it has been suggested that the literature about the Dogon is more a reflection of the thought patterns of the French researchers than of the people being studied. (p. 17)

It is interesting that internal contradictions have been observed and consistency demanded in view of the fact that there is hardly a system of thought that can claim to be free of inconsistencies, in this case whether it is the interpretations of Griaule or his informants. And certainly plurality itself will make for inconsistency and divergence. More reasonable is the criticism of a lack of historical consciousness. In fact, just as Ezra essentially points to the modernist Eurocentric bias of Griaule, so too one can discern in her quote the “postmodern” preoccupation with plurality of social voices, historicity, and European self-criticism operating to acknowledge shortcomings, but also to affirm and sustain the impression of a strong stream of reflexivity in European academic traditions, by which it justifies its claim to objective superiority. Nevertheless, there is something quite “modern” in the postmodern desire of Griaule’s critics to capture “the irregularities and textures of real life.” If one can see and feel in Ezra’s statement the
liberating arm of ever more self-conscious European scholarship—by
which it obscures its subjection to its own collective mentality—then
in contrast the African person and the meaning of her/his visual
manipulative objects remain limited to village and communal contexts,
limited to the past. One does not yet see or feel the African subject as
any more reflexive and self-determinative than before, rather the
African subject is the object of another network of concepts and frames,
more subtle perhaps, but with no risk of African will behind the reasons,
no glance forward, except unwittingly in unwitting forms. We can get
a sense of this interaction of past and present if we turn to one of Ezra's

Hountonji's critique of Griaule is part of his critique of
anthropology in Africa, and is situated in his castigation of it and some
of his fellow African intellectuals for perpetrating a deception, a myth;
namely that what has been offered by traditional informants, or worse
yet, has been distilled from them by western mediaters such as Placade
Temples (1969), is African philosophy. Hountonji is scathing in his
dismissal of the latter; they not only are Western constructions of African
philosophy, but reinforce the notion that Africans cannot distill the main
concepts of their philosophies themselves, Europeans have to do it for
them. In Temples' intervention the African person is still unconscious
of the philosophy he/she embodies and lives. Articulation of its
principles is a task to be taken up by a more disciplined mind, the
paternal European one. Griaule's attitude is better, but still imbued
with superiority, and still does not accord his informant the dignity of
individuality. Rather, Griaule's informant, Ogotemmeli, is the
mouthpiece of a communal mind, a mere spokesman of a mass mind:
the Dogon mind, African mentality.

Ogotemmeli can elaborate on an African perspective, but it is
not his liberated reason surveying history and ideas and arriving at
revisions. For Hountonji (1983) philosophy is a process of engagement
with historical reality resulting in a continuous revision and expansion
of ideas similar to science. This "self reflexivity" and historicity that is
the universal characteristic of philosophy is not what Ogotemmeli
offers, but he is an individual elucidating a religious system. And
systems in Hountonji's estimation are impervious to development. How
should we regard Ogotemmeli? As a theologian? Yes. As a philosopher?
No.

One can question Hountonji's assumption that all Ogotemmeli
has done is elaborate a static view. Having insisted that Ogotemmeli is
an individual, can we be sure that he has not given his spin on a more
general perspective? After all, one of the criticisms of Griaule is that he
relied on a limited number of informants, the implication being that
others may have had different perspectives on Dogon cosmology.
Regardless of such reservations Hountonji's anxiety is for an African
individuality that is marked by a critical rationality. It is manifested in
his determination not to fool himself or his fellow Africans as to what
philosophy really is (even if one questions his restriction of philosophy
to a European form, rational speculation) and in his certainty that
Africans must develop, must recover perhaps after a long interval,
science and philosophy. This desire is manifested in Hountonji's
sympathy for Diop's (1974) project of excavating a scientific African
tradition from ancient Egypt. This anxiety for an African science and
philosophy, and for an individuality and society recognized in those
terms is not the deep concern of anthropology and its postmodern
fascination with plurality and difference. The latter is still concerned
with the (very modern) project of understanding and representing more
faithfully the Other, hence the critique of Griaule's method as unable
to capture "the irregularities and texture of real life." What is critical is
that the interest of the African person in countering the stereotype of
irrationality and superstition finds very limited, if any, presence in
available texts. If the modernist tendency regards non-European culture,
and particularly African culture as raw material to be translated into the higher denominations of European cultural currency, disregarding and denigrating African reflexivity as integral to its culture, then postmodernist scholarship, even if more sensitive to African personhood, nevertheless skirts the issue of African reflexivity as if it is irrelevant to the issue of African art.

Representations of Africa go through at least two phases. First, there is the specialist of African art who, focused on a specific social group or culture, has already filtered and distilled information from other sources to be incorporated into his/her argument. Then there are the general texts that draw on the specialist, indeed, rely on editorial panels drawn from the ranks of the specialist. It is not difficult to see how all the institutional reins on what qualifies as academically sound objective studies are profoundly linked to the modern European need to ensure that it retains authority over what is acceptable knowledge. Outside these two moments is that occupied by African scholars who, often trained in European universities, are also constrained by the same norms. But, besides that they, like reflective persons in any culture, have to sift "real" knowledge from the spurious.

The focus in academia is on what visual manipulative works mean in the narrow context of anthropology. In studies of Western art one will find books ranging from Art and Physics, (Shlain, 1991), to Bürger’s Theory of the Avant-garde, (1984). African visual manipulative works are not approached in a similar way. There is limited use of African interpretive theories as may be found in divination or other practices. A similar situation would not happen with Chinese art, where it may not be out of place to use interpretive ideas structuring the I Ching. In a nutshell, the range of interpretive strategies applied to African visual manipulative forms is limited; therefore the “mind” generating them seems limited, especially compared to Europe or Asia. Who has constrained the meaning of African visual manipulative forms in this way other than those who authorize the texts on African art.

The confluence of the narrow focus with nationalist tendencies worked not only against diffusionist tendencies that would derive anything profound in Africa from ancient Egypt, but also against pan-African tendencies generally. It is also runs counter to more generalized levels of meaning, and is more congruent with the interest of having a more "textured" view of African culture. DeMott (1979), for example, demonstrates the inadequacy of Griaule and his school’s attempt to explain the meaning of Dogon sculpture exclusively via mythology. She resolves the claims of mythology, iconic images, and performed ritual, especially the former, by allowing for interplay of the three. This was justifiably corrective of the over application of mythology as an explanatory instrument. However, nowhere in her text does DeMott mention the astronomical information for which the mythology was a metaphor. That information indeed points to a tradition of thought grounded in observation of reality (even if that reality has not all been confirmed by modern science). It leads one beyond the stereotypes of superstition associated with animism, ancestors, the supernatural, and "magic," and is indicative of a more general African possession of that kind of knowledge. There is little doubt that Dogon astronomical knowledge profoundly impressed Griaule (1965) and his fellow researchers, and that he was convinced that these seemingly simple people were possessed of profound knowledge linked to ancient African and European traditions, which he called "Mediterranean" traditions.

It would seem, therefore, that the Zodiac of the Mediterranean peoples could be explained from the point of view of Dogon cosmology and metaphysic. But the European [Griaule] had no illusions about how such an argument was likely to be received by recognized specialists in academic circles. . . . Has it not been established once for all that the African has nothing to give, no contribution to make, that he cannot even reflect ancient forms of the world’s thought? Has he not always been relegated to the level of a slave? (p.215)
Yet this astronomical knowledge is left out of DeMott's specialist text, and also never finds a place in general texts on African art or otherwise. Why? The distance between black Africa and "Mediterranean" cultures must be maintained at all costs. The modern "Aryan Model" (Bernal, 1988, p.1) did it by denying any influence of Egypt on Greece. More recent anthropology and archeology's bias for indigenism, and postmodern emphases on plurality and difference arrive at a similar end through sympathy for nationalist tendencies and by downplaying—even dismissing pan-African suggestions. 

Masolo (1994, pp. 68-83), an example of one of the "otherwise," leaves Dogon astronomical knowledge out of his text on African philosophy in which he discusses Dogon ideas, He sticks quite safely to the metaphysical ideas but never refers to the astronomical information to which they are related. Most academics, European or African, do not want to look stupid by siding with something so incredulous as a "primitive" tribe of Africans having astronomical knowledge that modern science has only recently arrived at. Such concerns are not stuff "on the ground" as a bias for historicity may prefer, being more concerned with ideas. Rather, it is "too" up in the air and to that extent ungrounded and unreal. What is critical then, is not so much the meanings that Dogon mythology and objects can hold, but the sense of effrontery to the ego of Western science and civilization that they may present. Because it is unwise to trouble this ego, effectively guarded by a very dubious objectivity, Dogon astronomical information is filtered out of art texts.

There is also the unwillingness to accept the coexistence of science and religion together in African contexts, in an equation different to the estranged one that was imperative to European progress. A similar attitude is directed toward all non-European traditions of scientific knowledge, whether it is the science of yoga in India or concepts of the "chi" force in Far Eastern traditions. African cultures are far more susceptible to European tendencies to dismiss their knowledge as unscientific than those of India and the Far East because generally information is oral, without a textual tradition.

How can such information be irrelevant to the "meaning" the dances, masks, and rituals hold for Dogon culture, and from them for African cultures generally? Space suits, panels with lights and buttons, connote and symbolize to any viewer the scientific knowledge and related space exploration that is the achievement of modern science. What has determined that African visual manipulative works cannot have that kind of range of meaning? Only the peculiar kind of objectivity that will not acknowledge scientific thought to non-European traditions. Therefore, the impression that must prevail about Africa and African peoples, which the mediating scholar has decided is truer, is of a superstitious people with fantastic mythologies that have no ground in reality.

Others have been critical of the narrowness of frames used by art historians. In a review of a Bamana exhibition and catalogue Sarah Brett-Smith (2002), while complementing the contributions to the catalogue, is of the opinion that failure to take into account the practice of slavery in Africa's past not only gives a distorted view of the past, but also reduces the significance of objects.

The problem with the ahistorical viewpoint from which most of the otherwise excellent contributions to this book suffer is not just that it provides us with a sanitized picture of the African past, but also that on a purely intellectual plane it may stop us from a truly profound understanding of the powerful objects in this exhibition, and the creative invention and risk taking to which they are a witness. (P. 942)
Such is the way meaning shifts within frames, and from one frame to another, and expands to cumulative value when diverse frames hold together lift an object from banal and limited meaning to complex and profound value. Just as information about African slavery makes a difference to the meaning of Bamana objects, so too would Dogon astronomical knowledge make a difference to how any reader regards Dogon objects. The expansion to frames other than the art historical or anthropological clearly is necessary if we are not to be left with restricted notions of meaning for African visual manipulative objects.

Conclusion

What forces delayed the writing of texts that included the arts of African continent as a whole? The most powerful drag on change is the deeply and subtly embedded assumptions generated by European imperialism and global dominance. This is true of racial categories, as well as through the use of the category “art.” The assumed superiority of European science above all others in every respect, serves to keep the range of interpretive frames from which art historical texts view African cultures in narrow bounds. It is a modern presumption that others did not reach where European science has reached today, contradicted by confirmations by the said science of things propounded by non-European traditions. A confluence of the national identity interests of African states and cultures with trends in anthropology and archeology biased toward indigenous development overshadows pan-African aspects. Ironically, even in this postmodern moment that sees culture as a collage, the overly organic concept of culture persists, so that cultures cannot be seen to “meet” or coincide in terms of ideas in moments of similarity that transcend time and space. These are the forces that delayed the vision of African culture we are now seeing.

That the recent general texts on African art finally acknowledge the continent as a whole, its diversity, difference, and plurality, that it is multiracial and multicultural, indeed anciently so, is a step forward.

It promises to be a trend that will take texts out of the old formulas of representation of African cultures. A sad aspect of these changes is that many of those who battled against those norms we now see displaced, are labeled simply Afrocentricist, and major concerns articulated by them for all people of African origin have not been properly addressed by any of the texts including the recent ones, especially those related to “civilization” and black Africans.

New dilemmas will emerge. Ruth Phillips’ (2002) review of three exhibitions of African art signals what the “new” dilemmas are like. The key point she made that is relevant to my argument is captured in the following quote:

Under colonialism, and even more after its formal ending, the West has been exporting museums and their technologies of representation as integral parts of modernity’s achieving, memorializing, and nation building practices… What these three exhibitions show, then, is how successfully museological conventions have been exported and, to some extent, translated, so that now, in the era of globalization, museum savvy can be reimported to the “mother countries” through collaborative curatorial processes (p.951).

Phillips tends to see only how Western culture successfully dominates others, even subtly in so-called post-colonial postmodern times. While there is truth to that, what is also true is the subtle influence of the others on the West, and this subtle influence remains unrecognized and unacknowledged. The terms postmodern and postcolonial are too linear to accommodate the fact that different cultures had arrived at structurally similar realizations at different times. What is needed are studies of the subtle influences of the others on European and Euro-
American thought; and of how others, in this case people of Africa and its Diaspora, are incorporating European ideas and reinterpreting those derived from their own traditions.

Of the two texts that have dealt with the African continent as a whole, *Africa: the art of a Continent* is not without its critics. Rankin and Liebhammer (1996) for example regard it as perpetuating ahistorical notions of African visual manipulative forms and of keeping in place Eurocentric notions of the civilizational priority of North African cultures. Yet, the fact that prior texts seem to accept the exclusion of North African cultures from Africa makes such an inclusion a sign of progress. On the other hand, the narrow interpretive frames used by art historians makes the Eurocentric priority given to North African cultures, result not only from persistent ideas about cultural hierarchy, but also from the failure to see deeper connections between them and African cultures south of the Sahara which the use of more diverse frames would have facilitated. The lingering problem of "priority" based on racial or cultural difference cannot be resolved by simply flipping around the emphasis from south to north and visa versa, nor by affirmations of plurality and difference fashionable in this postmodern moment, but requires a more complex use of diverse frames of interpretation to allow the complexity of African culture to be seen. It will also allow the cognitive side of African objects to stand beside the emotive one, allow a more rich aesthetic to prevail, and dispel the notions of African irrationality that persist. What is needed above all is more writing about African visual manipulative forms by Africans from diverse perspectives, for this is why one never thinks about European objects in limited frames, their producers and consumers have viewed them from many perspectives.

There are also questions art educators have to ask themselves. Have we been critical enough of the assumptions of anthropology and African art history? Are we perpetuating myths about African visual manipulative objects? Have we taken sufficient account of the impact of non-Western cultures on the West? A deeper understanding of African visual manipulative traditions will offer insights that art educators have overlooked because we are still working from within contexts that are limited. Given the move in such academic projects as material culture studies, and the thesis by Bürger (1984) and Huyssen (1986) that the avant-garde was a drive within Europe to reconnect art with life, how can we maintain such an unbridgeable gulf between African visual manipulative traditions and European ones? A related problem is the notion that African art is almost all religious, any notion that science is involved is suppressed, as it would seem to fly in the face of mainstream science. It may be that art educators will need to be less restrictive than their historian and anthropologist colleagues in seeking perspectives from which to interpret Africa's visual manipulative traditions, objects and practices. Also, the failure to take into account African anxieties related to rationality not only contributes to the persistence of "aesthetic" emphases in African art exhibitions and texts, but to the perpetuation of a condescending portrayal of objectivity and rationality in African culture, in which the "difference" in African objectivity is more often than not a euphemism for irrationality. The stakes involved are too high for people of African descent, and all others, for art educators to ignore.

References


Piercing Gaze: 
Public Art in Schools

Laura Felleman Fattal

Paradigm of Silence

A gaze is a silent facial gesture while a piercing gaze suggests a shrieking sound. Unpacking the word, silence, allows one to look at the difference between the verbalizations hailing empowerment and the actual functioning of reinstatements of purpose in learning, teaching, and mentoring in a public school. Silence, in the following article, signals a discomfort, sometimes solitude and, at times, an abyss perhaps indicating the disparity between expectation and implementation. The depth of research necessary by the school community to reach consensus for names of dignitaries and the in-depth archival photographic research on the part of the professional artists required time commitments and levels of perseverance that were unforeseen by the participants. The challenge of maintaining community-building activities underscored the problematic issues entrenched in areas of high poverty. The following article is grouped around nine sections, a post script and references: Paradigm of Silence, Tagging a Neighborhood, African American and Latino Diaspora, Developmental Stages, Convincing the Public, Aspects of Production: Multiple Visions, Whole School Reform: Language Arts and Visual Literacy, Aesthetics of Truth and Reconciliation and Teaching Tolerance: State-wide Commissions.

Tagging a Neighborhood

Inspirational murals of portraits of African American political and social history line some of the most unsafe streets in our urban areas. CityArts in New York City or the Mural Program in Philadelphia provide a visual reminder by warning city dwellers they have now entered crime zones. Such beautifully rendered murals enliven brick and plaster walls of buildings that often face abandoned lots, partially destroyed row houses and empty office spaces. Murals, in this context, are both a call 'to watch-your-step' because you are in a treacherous area of town as well as mark the redevelopment zones of hope, renewal and aspirations for residents of this street.

The history of painted and ceramic walls supports the political and social motivations for creating murals. Mexican murals in the 1920s encouraged improvements in social welfare and land reform. Murals depicting the ideals of the Russian Revolution of 1917 promulgated the Communist Party's agenda. And, the federal initiative in the United States in the 1930s known as the Workers Progress Administration (WPA), hired artists to create murals both immortalized American ideals of freedom and enlightenment and the American worker in post offices, train stations, office buildings, and other public places.

African American and Latino Diaspora

Towns in central New Jersey often have deceptive architectural facades, both luxurious and downtrodden, which underscore the need to describe and understand the experiences of African American and Latino diaspora populations. Plainfield, like Newark, New Jersey, experienced extreme racial tensions in the late 1960s which drastically changed the demographic profile and economic stability of the town. In the central New Jersey town of Plainfield, the superintendent of the high-poverty school district envisioned public art in the newly built Washington Community School (grades preK-5) as a way to celebrate its community-building mission. The School is a large red brick building
with clean large classrooms, two playgrounds, a large well-equipped gymnasium, cafetorium, dance studio, health clinic, and library. The library has a large angled window that enables passerbyers to see into the school, again, a way of embracing community.

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was sent to prominent African American artists such as Mel Edwards, Glenn Ligon, Emma Amos, Alonzo Adams, Indira Bailey, Wendell Brooks, Faith Ringgold, and Lorenzo Pace. Those artists who chose to participate described their project to a committee of community members and school administrators, illustrating their vision through slides, maquettes, drawings, and models. Lorenzo Pace was awarded the funds to fulfill the designated proposal utilizing his children’s book (based on a family history) Jalani and the Lock as the central wall imagery. Lorenzo Pace was born in 1943 in Birmingham, Alabama. He received his Bachelors of Fine Arts and Masters of Fine Arts degrees from the School of The Art Institute of Chicago and his doctorate from Illinois State University. Lorenzo Pace has been the director the Montclair State University Art Gallery for over ten years. The African Burial Grounds in lower Manhattan was honored in the year 2000 with the large public sculpture by Lorenzo Pace entitled Triumph of the Human Spirit. The two sidewalls of the stairwell at Washington Community School would integrate ten portraits each of important African American and Latino leaders/dignitaries/heroes embellished with Lorenzo Pace’s interpretation of the individual’s contribution to better humankind. In conjunction with Lorenzo Pace’s stairwell installation that included mural painting and collage elements as well as framed portraits, the school’s 5th grade art club of ten students, drew and painted concrete representations of careers/futures the students are planning for themselves. The student work has a distinguished portion of the half wall overhanging the stairwell.

In addition, four weekend community workshops were held for students and their families to create three 20’ long by 6’ high banners for the cafetorium of Washington Community School. The workshops varied in attendance from 100 to 5 students with decreasing participation as the weeks continued. Two local professional artists—Mel Holston and Caryl Henry—led the three-hour Saturday morning banner workshops. Mel Holston was born in 1939 and studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology and Jersey City State College and in Paris, France. His work has also been shown at galleries and museums throughout New Jersey and has been reviewed by the Newark Star Ledger, The Jersey Journal, Black Enterprise Magazine, Art Business News, and other prominent newspapers. Caryl Henry is a visual artist and educator who sees the healing aspects of art as pivotal to instilling change to the world. She has been awarded four California Arts Council Artist-in-Residence grants, two Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation grants and has been designated a Master Teaching Artist by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. In 1998 she completed eight murals and four banner projects for Newark, New Jersey; some of which have been shown at the Newark Museum and the Newark Liberty International Airport.

The local artists developed ideas for the banners closely related to Lorenzo Pace’s installation. The banners spoke to the theme of the African and Caribbean diaspora, mirroring the ethnic population of Washington Community School, through images of cultural artifacts. Specific ethnic foods, clothing, music, and dance are referenced along with well known stories/characters and maps of Africa, Latin America, and the United States. The student artists were influenced in their artistic designs by the books, postcards, and posters the professional artists brought to the weekend workshops to assist students in solidifying their choice of subject. Challenging the students to think of their everyday lives as examples of ethnicity and a segment of American
society requires a bit of anthropological detachment that was difficult for students to understand. Two of the student artists, however, were new Americans from Guatemala. On a cold Saturday in March of 2003, the two sisters wore white straw hats with paper flowers, blue and pink dresses, and blue sandals. This wardrobe alone speaks to cultural artifacts of clothing and stages of assimilation into mainstream (North) American society. With the depictions of family meals, people’s pants, shirts and sweaters, and hairstyles and characters of historical stories illustrated in books, the professional artists brought to life the type of pictures that the students were to draw on their banners.

**Developmental Stages**

As in many activities in urban school districts, the challenges of arranging personal time needed to complete school-centered projects with competing priorities such as juggled work times, childcare, entertainment, familial responsibilities, and self-improvement are monumental. The weekend banner painting workshops were designed to be three hours in length requiring steady perseverance in slowly creating large banners/mural. Many of the parents brought their children to the workshop one and two hours late and just assumed there was a place for them in the middle of the project. Washington Community School students, at times, were accompanied by siblings of varying ages or by parents who were more interested in drawing and painting themselves than assisting or encouraging their children to draw and paint on the banners. Some students were distracted from working on the banners by seeing their peers out of the classroom setting. Mel Holston and Caryl Henry, the local professional artists, of course, accommodated this non-traditional sense of time. The students understood that the banners, at completion, were to be displayed in the cafetorium. There were no snacks, certificates, or trophies for participation in the weekend project, just the self-empowering feeling of working on a public art project that would be visible to all students and visitors in the school for many years.

Young children’s artwork has been source material for research aimed at understanding the psycho-social developmental stages of emotional and academic growth. Where to start on a black piece of paper, the use of cartoons as a reference to draw a human body, and tracing the professional artists’ work are common hurdles for students unaccustomed to drawing and/or realizing their own ideas with art materials. One of the goals of these Saturday workshops was to see elaboration of an idea – in the form of a sketch, drawing or painting. This progression in elaborating on a work of art was encouraged individually or in a group of two or three students. Indeed, the question of drawing as a public or private activity arises in collective art projects such as this one. The weekend banner project provided insights into how individual students think, plan, draw, and reflect upon their artwork as well as noting developmental growth in groups.

Students were best motivated by seeing imagery of ideas i.e. freedom, slavery, exile, diaspora, salvation, comfort, praise, redemption, and love, etc. as viewed by mature artists. With the springboard of established images, students were able to be empowered to design and draw their own pictures of ideas. But, it was unclear if the students in the community workshops saw their work linked to Lorenzo Pace’s stairwell installation, though they were told the projects are thematically tied together. To have the opportunity to draw pictures on large banners with professional artist mentoring, which happened to be a unique experience for students who only draw on 8”x11” size paper, was intended to be a liberating arts experience. At best, there was a goal to lessen the feelings of artistic insecurity in students. Nevertheless, social tension arose within the group project. Some students distracted other students from the work at hand, while comparisons between students who were self-motivated and those who needed constant supervision and correction were often quite visible. Prodding, energizing, and verbal praise were instructional-type methods conducted by the professional
artists. One of the initial motivations for the creation of the stairwell art installation that needed to include portraits of historic and contemporary African American and Latino diaspora leaders was to reinforce the weight of history, meaning the expectation of on-going academic accomplishment for today's students, supported by the gaze of these accomplished male and female heroes who are role models for overcoming adversity. The portrait installation in the stairwell underlines the direct need to see oneself as a progeny of accomplished ancestors/dignitaries. As the superintendent anticipated in first designing the components to the art installation, the concreteness, compassion and inspiration of the human face offer renewed hope for tomorrow.

Mel Holston, one of the local professional artists, had taught elementary school-age students in an urban area for over twenty years. He know the push and pull of process vs. product. Initially scorned by Caryl Henry, the other professional artist, and the arts supervisor as being too programmed and un inventive, Mel Holston offered his elongated silhouetted African figures, African animals and pottery templates for students to copy. The students' contributions were intricate lace-like repeated designs that were created inside of the silhouettes. The resultant three 20' banners were composed of silhouetted figures arranged by Mel Holston. Caryl Henry had painted appropriate sky and land settings for the figures. When possible, she had students assist her in painting the backgrounds for the figures. As the student body dwindled over the four weekend workshops, Caryl Henry did most of the painting herself seeing the need for a final product. The students who attended the workshops saw the impressive progress of the banners. However, this did not translate into their valuing a continued participation in the project nor in soliciting their friends to join them in a Saturday workshop.

The dynamics of family is an on-going process. It took two evening events to enable the adult community to begin to understand the purpose for and the breadth of the art-making endeavor in the stairwell. A general flyer taken home by students combined with Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) phone calls produced a very small turn-out of parents for an initial 'meet-the-artist' evening meeting. Working with the rituals and routines of the Washington Community School schedule, a second evening event was planned but this time tied to a Book of the Month club reading of A Dinner at Aunt Connie's House by Faith Ringgold and serving a community-prepared dinner at a regular PTO meeting. The second 'meet-the-artist' evening produced over 150 people to hear Lorenzo Pace's evocative description of his vision of the stairwell project. Introducing the local professional artists, Mel Holston and Caryl Henry added a family-friendly dimension to the evening; participants were able to experience the personalities of the artists who would be interfacing with the students. The first community-building meeting provided a better understanding of the goals of the stairwell and banner project for the principal, vice principal, family liaisons, community coordinators, and PTO president. After a second community-building meeting, the school administration could articulate, with a unified confidence, the importance of inserting visual representations of African American and Latino history cultural diversity, and academic achievement into the ambience of the school.
Aspects of Production: Multiple Visions

Lorenzo Pace started painting the 40’ walls of the stairwell two months after he community-building meetings took place to recruit students for the weekend drawing and painting projects. He left some paint droppings on the linoleum steps, but more importantly, painted one wall lime green, one wall lemon yellow and one wall salmon. The principal politely asked the arts supervisor to come over to the school to see what was taking place. With any history in dealing with the public, the nay-sayers speak first and speak loudly. All the people approving of the changed color of the walls, including the school’s art teacher, were quiet. In this instance, silence is understood as an approved acceptance. The belief in Lorenzo Pace’s vision that was a multi-tiered art-making process was wrapped in the necessary silence of waiting by some members of the school community. But as grimaces and genuine fear spread throughout the school community members wary of change, Lorenzo Pace was invited back to speak and reshown his maquette to the administrators to soothe their trepidations and to speak of his new idea to paint the gray railing either violet or red. The community coordinator, vice principal and principal initially squealed at the thought of the violet or red railing. They were assuaged, however, when Lorenzo Pace put a long red leather coat over the railing to mimic what it would look like, generating a hum of approval. Ultimately, the railing was painted violet, catching the electricity of color that careens from the images and panels of the dignitaries’ portraits and the story book pages from Jalani and the Lock and the students’ futures on the walls.

Two weeks later, Lorenzo Pace started marking the wall with royal blue tape to indicate where he was to put the portraits. Another group of nay-sayers started voicing their disapproval and the school started receiving phone calls asking Lorenzo Pace to stop work. At this point, there was recognition for the need to hang signs saying ‘work-in-progress’ to be posted on each of the stairwell walls. The challenges of a ‘work-in-progress’ is similar to the complexities of doing art in a community setting, like the Saturday student workshops versus working in the privacy of one’s studio or home. Is making art ever a public activity, where there is always interpersonal chatter, and not the silent dialogue the artist has with the artwork?

The unheard conversations going on between Lorenzo Pace, Caryl Henry and the arts supervisor revolved around who was researching and reproducing the images of the personalities who would ultimately confront the students on a daily basis with their piercing gaze so as to act as inspiration to them. Though handsomely rewarded in the Request for Proposals (RFP) parameters, Lorenzo Pace refused to do his own research. Thirteen school librarians were then mobilized to look through books and posters to find 11” x 17” color and/or black and white photographs of the designated African American and Latino leaders. The designated leaders/dignitaries/personalities/heroes were: From the past-Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Barbara Jordan, Tito Puente, Lewis Latimer, Harriet Tubman, Alex Haley, Madame C.J. Walker, and Mary McLeod Bethune. From the present-Muhammed Ali, Rosa Parks, Milton Campbell, Colin Powell, Maya Angelou, Oprah Winfrey, Guion Bluford, Jr. Ray Blanco, Dr. Mae Jemison, and Rigoberta Menchu Tum.
The process to choose these leaders went through several permutations until their final selection. First, the selection community for the professional artist was to choose personalities. There was, however, no follow-through perhaps another kind of silence, on this request. Washington Community School students and administrators were then going to select twenty personalities through a group vote, which through some manipulation, ensured the inclusion historical and contemporary figures, men and women, and a variety of professions. The massaging of the list of personalities took two months longer than imagined which can be interpreted as a brief silence. The two month delay on the selection supposedly delayed Lorenzo Pace two months in his locating and redesigning of the portrait panels. It was assumed that Lorenzo Pace would put the necessary time in the library and the copy store to find the correct size and type of portrait—ultimately duplicating it for the stairwell. This was a misunderstanding since school districts do not have studio assistants on their payroll that do this kind of work and Lorenzo Pace was not prepared to do this type of work himself. Surprised by the uncompromising stance of the artist, the arts supervisor recognized that the pictorial and textual research area of the project was tapping into an uncomfortable and perhaps forbidding area work zone. What is not said is often more powerful than what is said in conversation or interviews. Silence and/or intermittent silences in this case portrayed an aspect of the artists that was unseen by the selecting committee. The multi-vocal participants on the Washington Community School banners and stairwell installation provided an opportunity to employ
caryl Henry, one of the local professional artists, in a new role since she was personally motivated to find images of the African American and Latino diaspora heroes. She reproduced almost all of the heroes’ portraits with the exception of one personality who was impossible to locate (Milton Campbell), though an Olympic gold medal winner and truly a local celebrity. The Milton Campbell’s family was eventually cajoled into bringing in an appropriate portrait. A local record producer (Ray Blanco) had his office send in an actual photograph of himself that had to be enlarged and changed from black and white to color. Lorenzo Pace had decided on making a differentiation on past and present heroes by using black and white and color photographs, respectively. This seemingly small request by Lorenzo Pace made the hunt for the photographs that much more time-consuming. For instance, the Guatemalan Embassy did not readily have a color photograph of Rigoberta Menchu Tum. With no evidence of artwork on the walls, the convincing of the public of the worthiness of the project was slightly derailed with the shift in work load from artist to pick-up artist. The portraits with brief biographical statements simultaneously were undergoing vigilant triple checking of the spelling and text recognizing word and image were both storytelling components.

Lorenzo Pace’s creativity is showcased in the inventive use of toys and miniature replicas of symbols associated with certain professions. The chosen African American and Latino diaspora leaders depicted on the walls of the Washington Community School stairwell as mentioned were divided into two categories—historical and contemporary. The
The colorful multi-paneled retelling of Jalani on the widest of stairwell walls calls out to the pre K through grade 5 students school. The placement of portraits in a checkerboard pattern, arranged in a triangular fashion, on an incline or decline according to how one walks the stairs, the relief surface of the portraits so enlivened by the three dimensional objects, all became a final installation decision. With scaffolding in place, Lorenzo Pace needed to experiment with various wall compositions of the framed portrait panels for several days. The elaborate scaffolding reaching to the top of the 40’ ceiling allowed for a full view of the visual arrangement of panels. Final consideration of placement of the portraits was determined best to be along a straight readable line parallel to the second landing.

Whole School Reform: Language Arts and Visual Literacy

Lorenzo Pace’s art installation, in part, incorporates through enlargement and mixed media the text of his book Jalani and the Lock. The art installation fuses words and images in a developmentally appropriate and visually exciting manner. Ensuring that students could read from a distance of a stair or landing, the size and clarity of the text next to the panels of the heroes and the enlarged pages of the storybook Jalani and the Lock were a concern in hanging the art. Lorenzo Pace understood from the initiation of the project that student learning in the area of reading, writing, listening, and speaking were vital to student academic success. Nurturing the individual imagination as well as conveying the cultural legacy of African American and Latino diaspora, Lorenzo Pace along with Caryl Henry and Mel Holston designed the installation and banners to be read literally and aesthetically. There is a deliberate attempt by the professional artists to cognitively engage students as they climb the stairwell going between the first and second floor of the school and when seeing the community banners displayed in the cafetorium to pull meaning from the images in the artwork. Silence can accompany this engagement as if the student is putting together pieces of a visual puzzle. The visual puzzle embraces ideas associated with visual literacy; art can be found in the world around us, a general visual acuity makes for more productive learning, art need not be hierarchical divided between consumer versus high culture, and multicultural artifacts offer important interpretative tools to global understanding.
Whole school reform efforts have assiduously planned literacy and mathematical blocks of times with individual and group projects, timed readings and scorings, sharing and solitary thinking times, activities centered on manipulatives and cerebral abstractions, while little thought has gone into the class structure of visual arts classrooms in urban settings. The language of reforming schools such as "feedback, "ramp-up," "push-back," and "going to one's strong side," are each necessary aphorisms to signal the monumental effort that is required to move literacy and mathematical achievement forward as well as coordinate the display of community cohesion in urban areas. The balance of addressing the nationally mandated core curriculum content standards has, to date, not found parity between subject areas. Projects like those at Washington Community School, however, provide some opportunities to see the affect of motivating text and image on student learning. With the emergence of visual literacy as a new lens on arts education, researchers working with whole school reform models might more readily incorporate the arts into the center of the student learning. In the context of No Child Left Behind, there are over 25 university and other data-based research centers that have refined rituals and routines, reading lists, questioning strategies, and Book of the Month selections to move underachieving students forward. Even before President George W. Bush's push for early literacy, the following comprehensive reform programs were in place in recognizing the national literacy problem: High Scope K-3 Model, Association for Direct Instruction, Accelerated Schools Project K-8, High Schools that Work 9-12, Modern Red Schoolhouse, Paideia, Roots and Wings, Success for All, Urban Learning Centers preK-12, Talent Development High School 9-12, Basic School Network, Center for Effective Schools, Child Development Project, Different Ways of Knowing, America's Choice, Ventures, and the Coalition of Essential Schools K-12. The intensity and proliferation of research activity in early reading and continued literacy programs underscores the vitality of the problem that is centered in urban areas in the United States.

Aesthetics of Truth and Reconciliation

One enters the town of Plainfield, New Jersey, where the school population is 65% African American and 35% Latino, through the gates of Chicken Holiday, Planet Chicken, Friendly's advertising 'free sundae with chicken item,' and Popeye Chicken and Biscuits. Perhaps the painted murals are not needed to tag the neighborhood. The only long lasting businesses are funeral homes and locksmith shops. The teen-age adolescents on the streets are dressed in oversized white tee shirts and blue jeans, an unofficial uniform. Wearing clothes that are too clean and nice to paint in was an initial issue for the students at the Saturday workshops. White pantsuits, dresses, and good navy blue pants are not clothes for painting. Easing parents and students into the hoped
for routine of weekend painting workshop were met with telling comments by parents saying “I do church and revival meetings but I do not paint or go to theater.”

Set-up for disappointment or set-up for success was perhaps an unspoken question for students who were involved in beyond-the-school-day projects. After a student gave up a portion of a lunch hour for an extremely well ordered art club class, the student realized he/she was one of only ten students selected for the favored position of working on one wall of the Pace installation. Is this punishment or reward to do more work? While the artist was reworking the portraits/dignitaries, the art club was creating depictions of professions/futures. Other concerns were: will parents come to see the final product? Will students be embarrassed by their parents’ lack of interest in their accomplishments, so they are, at times, hesitant to set themselves up for emotional disappointment? The required verbalizations of the student artists’ pictorial intention in the art club projects, the tight controls on handing out and packing up art materials, the separation of students from each other ensured no possibility of disharmony within the art club classroom. There was an orchestrated silence and discussion in this regulation of student behavior to promote productivity. These preventions and class structuring are saved for classrooms where students have few of their own controls. Silence, as it encourages academic productivity is favored by African American parents. African American parents want from their schools high standards, competitive test scores, and a well trained and dedicated teaching staff along with racial integration and sensitivity towards issues of diversity.

The art club students were told their assignment was to depict professions/futures in law, medicine, and business; professions requiring years of education. The initial set of drawings and paintings were ironically both prosaic and abstract. With a newly understood mission by the teacher, the students painted on pristine white canvas squares 15”x15” with iridescent and matte paint. The art club children’s final project shows fashion models, basketball and football stars, a president of the United States, a nurse, a teacher, a cook, and other professions. There was a deafening silence from the principal regarding the renewal of the art teacher’s teaching contract as the art club had completed its work. During the last day of classes the art teacher disguised her immense disappointment in not being rehired and relayed to the administrative staff of the school that the finished painted canvas squares were neatly rolled and stored with the community liaison of the school. However, the canvas squares could not be located for over a week during the time of installation in late summer 2003. Suspicion and silence were coordinates in various collaborators’ minds wondering where the student artwork was being kept. The well preserved student canvases were found in a locked cabinet in the main office erasing any disingenuous motivations of the dismissed teacher.

Dividing turf responsibilities, when working with a professional artist, was an area of contention. At a late date, Lorenzo Pace had not scheduled an installation time for the school district to rent and put up scaffolding and had not revealed his intention on how to bolt the numerous painted panels to the cinderblock walls-though there had been some discussion and demonstration of actual possible attachment devises. The head custodian of Washington Community School had requested that the stairwell public art project be completed before school began in early September 2003, since blocking the stairwell would
disrupt all student movement in the school. It was the combination of doubt, hope and belief in the project that kept everyone moving on, knowing in the back of everyone’s mind the powerful unveiling would make the journey all worthwhile. At one o’clock in the morning on a Saturday night and then again at four o’clock in the morning on a Sunday morning in August 2003, the school’s motion detector rang in the head custodian’s home. He came to the school looking for possible falling or fallen objects. After careful inspection, he saw that the newly attached raffia strands glued to the newly installed wood borders around the central wall’s plaques telling the story of Jalani and the Lock were occasionally being blown by wind from the air conditioning vents.

Lorenzo Pace came to the school the next day with a glue gun to secure the raffia, a material used on West African huts as depicted in the storybook. The fire code regulators had been alerted to the elements of the art installation with its wood bolted panels and various types of paint and plastic and cloth objects. Ambiance enhancers and safety regulations are sometimes mismatched dance partners.

**Teaching Tolerance: State-wide Commissions**

In February 2003, the New Jersey legislature passed the Amistad Bill empowering the newly established Amistad Commission to promote and implement education and awareness programs concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, and the depth of the impact of slavery on the fabric of American life. The Amistad Commission facilitates workshops, institutes, seminars, and other teacher training activities on a regular basis throughout the state of New Jersey regarding the mission of making African American history an integral part of American history. The Washington Community School stairwell art installation and cafetorium banners completed in fall of 2003 received a proclamation from the Secretary of State who was co-chair of the Amistad Commission. The proclamation honored the art installation as an instructional vehicle to enhance understanding of African American contributions to all aspects of society in the state of New Jersey. The ceremonial unveiling highlighted the school district’s mission to go beyond the rhetoric of achievement and to work towards reaching high academic performance for all students. Intellectual quandaries of seeing curricula issues surrounding multiculturalism as a process, a philosophical orientation or as an instructional theory were an essential part of Lorenzo Pace’s installation and the creation of the community banners. The students’ cultural identity was enhanced through arts activities and acknowledged by representatives of state government.

The Pace installation at Washington Community School, though not visible from the street but bathed in natural light from its upper windows, allegorically approaches issues of facades versus realities of communities on multiple levels. Engaging all visitors to Washington Community School are the painted panels of the storybook Jalani and the Lock, a family history through the Middle Passage, living and past legacies of African American and Latino peoples shown through portraiture and contemporary student artwork foreshadowing their aspirations and futures. When Lorenzo Pace first presented his idea for the school installation, he played a flute to conjure up immediate
and distant memory of his deceased ancestors, perhaps those who had suffered as slaves. The stairwell installation by Lorenzo Pace provokes a multi-level understanding of cultural identity through meditation on the piercing gazes of the historic and contemporary heroes and through reading texts written for children of all ages. Looking at the children's glowing faces as they inspect and become accustomed to living with art has answered Lorenzo Pace's daughter's question, "Dad, do we come from slaves?" Everyone can now answer her and say "yes," but "we have moved on to better places." The discomfort, the solitude and the abyss of silence has been transformed into hope and security in one's cultural identity.

Post Script

Cable and public television stations covered the opening event (October 28, 2003) with broadcasts that extended for over three weeks. State-wide and local newspapers had photo essays depicting the student artists, Lorenzo Pace, Caryl Henry, Mel Holston and the school district organizers. The students in Washington Community School performed the play "If a Bus Could Talk, The Story of Rosa Parks" adapted from the Faith Ringgold book of the same name in February 2004. The portrait of Rosa Parks, part of the Pace installation, was therefore brought to life by the student performance in celebration of African American history month celebrations for 2004.

References


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Three Silences: Infection . . . Abjection . . . Art Education

Bob Sweeney

“f**king fagot”

The students were waiting for the bus that would take them home after Drama Club, Intramurals, detention. Some students were sitting on the steps, as instructed by another teacher and myself who had either been assigned or volunteered for ‘bus duty’ that afternoon. The majority of the students were in various states of agitation, fueled by hormones that had just recently been switched into overdrive by developing pituitary glands. Buying sodas, ‘athletic’ drinks, and junk food from the vending machines, chasing each other around the bathrooms that separated the cafeteria from the exits, most of the students seemed like a research group which had been recently injected with near-lethal mixtures of sugar and Ritalin.

Arthur (note: names of students and school have been changed) had ingested his share of caffeine, beginning to work on a body which was forced to sit in a room of mandatory quiet, punctuated by the bellowing of the room monitor, the giggles of students seeing an adult lose it over a kid tapping his pencil, the occasional ‘bullshit’ coughed out, resulting in yet another day in detention. This body, seated in a molded plastic chair-desk combo, had been still for long enough. The bell rung, the room monitor shouting “The bell did not dismiss you...” as students poured out of the room, out of the school, to walk along the four-lane road where students were occasionally hit, one infamously...
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killed, returning to their (town)home or hanging out with other kids at the strip mall across the street, stealing from the grocery store where they were only allowed two at a time. Those who could not walk home waited for the bus: waited with Arthur.

The first bus pulled up to the school, and the student activity level lowered a bit. Most were unaffected by the arrival of their transport. Arthur continued to chase the occasional girl, stopping only to talk to friends, each statement filled with cuss-words that had accumulated over the school day, finding release among friends. While most students had begun to line up and present their bus passes — given out to those who had participated in school sanctioned activities — Arthur and his crew continued to socialize, each inflated by their down-filled jackets. As I walked over to the group, most broke from their social mode, gathered their things, and prepared to board the bus. Arthur continued to talk until none of his friends remained. When I asked Arthur to get out his pass and line up, he did not respond.

A teacher’s commands are not external or additional to what he or she teaches us. They do not flow from primary significations or result from information: an order always and already concerns prior orders, which is why ordering is redundancy. The compulsory education machine does not communicate information; it imposes upon the child semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar (masculine-feminine, singular-plural, noun-verb, subject of the statement-subject of enunciation) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, p. 75-6).

Deleuze and Guattari have done much to challenge notions of binary relationships upon which much of Western thought is based. Their description of the imposition of language inherent in educational systems does not, however, take into account the fluctuations that take place when the order is received. The responses formed by students as receivers in classroom settings vary significantly, and often go unrecognized, specifically when they are nonverbal in nature. Art educators have the opportunity to reorder classroom spaces to accommodate multiple voices (or lack thereof) through experiences that acknowledge the possibilities for silence as an aesthetic approach. An analysis of the relationship between silence imposed upon the body of the student and the physical response this silence provokes may lead to such possibilities.

Many students do follow the ordering nature of instruction as described by Deleuze and Guattari, whether implicit or explicit. This transferal is not entirely efficient, however. Students are confused by commands. They resist institutional structures to varying degrees. They drift away, turn off, space out. The educator performs language, which is inscribed upon the student. The student is not a passive receptor in every scenario; they react, they respond, they refuse to speak.

“What activity were you in, Arthur?”
“Is something the matter?”
“Do you have a bus pass?”
“If you don’t answer me, you can’t ride the bus home.”

Arthur remained silent through each of these questions. The rest of his social circle had broken rank, and were lined up, ready to board the bus. His four-foot frame remained erect, unmoved, puffed up by his winter coat and reinforced by twelve-year-old bravado. His hazy brown eyes locked on mine. He had stood his ground. I had done the same.

Arthur and I walked to the main office, where he was to call for a ride home. After briefly describing what had happened to his sister, I handed the phone to him. He mumbled a bit and hung up the phone. His mother either could not, or would not, pick him up from school.
He was visibly disturbed, but still said nothing. He stormed out of the office and ran across the parking lot, towards his townhouse where he, his sisters, and his mother lived. As he neared the road, he turned back towards the school, still moving in an outward trajectory. He shouted the first words since I had unsuccessfully forced him to speak. "Fucking Faggot."

Confrontations such as this were fairly common at Aspen, as they probably are at most middle schools. In thinking about the effects of order words on student receivers, I have been recalling my days in the classroom, specifically reviewing incidents where my authority as a teacher was directly challenged. Most of the memorable events, such as my after-school interaction with Arthur, seem to have been at least partially influenced by my lack of experience in the classroom. I look back on many of these episodes of conflict and am a bit embarrassed, realizing that I had exacerbated a tense situation through my rigid enforcement of the rules, in an effort to keep order: an inflexible approach met with linguistic silence, physical rigidity.

"... for which it stands"

The pledge of allegiance is a public school tradition that is still rehearsed throughout the United States. In my experience this routine is not treated with the respect it may have once been afforded; students are urged to stand, mumble a few rhythmic words, and slump back into their seats. At the beginning of first period Ceramics class, students were in the midst of this automated procedure. As they finished listening to the announcements broadcast over the loudspeaker and took their seats, one student remained standing. Robert. I began to discuss the activities for the day, expecting Robert to take his seat. He did not. I asked him to have a seat. He would not respond, he would not move. As the rest of the students watched, seated, Robert and I stood face to face, the distance shrinking, a disciplinary duel acted out at short range, each armed only with individual will.

Robert’s silence was matched by his erect posture, defiant in the face of order. Was this a response to being asked to stand for something with which he did not agree? His nonverbal response to my commands were embodied, acted out through a gesture that a few minutes earlier was a sign of respect for flag, republic, God. What had Robert meant by this act? Was it simple hard-headedness? Could it be seen as an act of political defiance? As I stood there, staring back into eyes that seemed not to reflect my image, I thought about the rumors.

Robert was in the seventh grade, attending Aspen with his brother Barney. Both were infamous in the school for their antics: disruptive bordering on antisocial. It had been said that they were recent immigrants from Africa. They had lost their father. They had witnessed unspeakable things that might have contributed to their unruly behavior. It is only now that I have begun to research these myths and uncover fragments of their family history, thinking of Robert standing rigid in the face of authority.

Liberia is the oldest of African republics, established by American philanthropists and settled by freed American slaves in 1822. This era of rule ended in 1980, when African soldier Samuel Doe led a coup in which the existing president was assassinated. Doe assumed power, suspended the constitution, and carried out his rule through a People’s Redemption Council that approved a new constitution in 1984. Doe was made president after an election many feel was blatantly rigged (Peace Pledge Union, 2001).

The military takeover of the long-established government — engineered by American interests — created an unstable political situation in Liberia. A number of attempted coups failed to unseat the Doe regime. His reign came to an end when Charles Taylor, descendent
of freed slaves and a soldier from Côte D'Ivoire, led an uprising that successfully overthrew the ruling body. It is suspected that Taylor, who was imprisoned in the United States at the time, was freed and returned to Africa at the request of the CIA.

Samuel Doe was captured by the rebel forces, tortured, possibly sodomized, and killed. The details of his torture vary. One account states that his ear was cut off, eventually bleeding to death. Nowhere does it discuss the fate of his family, who may have immigrated to the United States, to live in the northeast, where his sons would attend Aspen Middle School, become objects of speculation, and stand defiantly when asked to sit.

I have long since left Aspen, teaching for two more years at the high school level before returning to Penn State to work on my doctoral degree in Art Education. As I think back to my interactions with Arthur and Robert, I remember the impact each carried, intensified through their refusal to speak. The recent removal of Taylor from power in Liberia has only caused these events to resonate further: the current media silence in the U.S. regarding this situation reminds me of my efforts to retain control in my classroom. Am I taking advantage of these students in order to further my own pedagogical interests, only to discard their stories when something more provocative comes along?

I hope not. I have not thought of these students in some time; writing our stories helps me to better appreciate my current educational struggles. Their silence helps me to understand my own potential leanings towards authoritarianism in the classroom, and our individual conflicts led to healthy student/teacher relationships. Although I got to know both a bit better, and learned to be more flexible in the classroom, I knew that they — and possibly all of my students — held within them this capability for silence, a silence which disrupts in a way that nothing spoken could.

pissed off by Piss Christ

Recently a student of mine addressed this topic in a course that I teach at Penn State University, titled Art 100: Concepts and Creations in the Visual Arts. Aniie recently remarked in class that she chose not to speak when viewing an artwork that she thought offensive — Andres Serrano's Piss Christ (1989). She said that she thought that we (the teachers) were showing this particular work in order to try and provoke a response. By remaining silent, she had hoped to disrupt this provocation — "I wanted to piss you guys off" — based upon her interpretation of our pedagogical intent, and possibly the artist's as well.

No one in the class would have known about this action had she not brought it to our attention in a later class, when the issue of offensive works of art was again being discussed. Her activity that had initially been about resisting language eventually was expressed verbally. This resistance, which had been effective for her as receiver, was still a response to the ordering inherent in education. Her verbal feedback afforded the other instructors and myself the opportunity to assess our intent. Did her silence piss me off? No more than any of the other moments when carefully crafted questions are met with blank stares and zipped lips. Regardless of our reaction, her silence must be seen as yet another order. Willfully withdrawing from discourse seems to be one of the most extreme acts a student can perform, disrupting the ordering of the educator through a nonlinguistic act.

Was this initial silent act disruptive within the class? I see it having this potential only within the context of prior interactions, which seems to follow the ordering process as described by Deleuze and Guattari. Silence on the part of this student could only be acknowledged as such if it stood in opposition to what she had said previously: an absence of
language, a pregnant pause, failing to yell “FIRE” in the theatre as the velvet seats are lapped by flames.

"... try as we may to make a silence, we cannot" (Cage, 1961, p. 8). While silence as John Cage describes it may be unattainable, there can be an act which stands for silence, a null set within the mathematics of classroom interaction. This performed silence subverts order by doing nothing. Do nothing. Each student that refused to speak nonetheless interacted, a linguistic withdrawal matched with a physical response: rigor. As Cage (1961) writes, the ability for humans to experience silence is eliminated through bodily functions. The body speaks while we remain mute. The consistent rhythm of the heart, the atonal whine of the nervous system, improvisations provided by the lungs, the sphincter. This bodily refrain is rarely heard in the classroom; every opportunity for silence is muffled by overanxious educators bent on exercising their particular horror vacui. The act that stands in—the metonym for silence—is as performative as language; it is indeed still language, masquerading as other. It is abject.

silence as the abject (viral) self

In abjection, revolt is completely within being. Within the being of language. Contrary to hysteria which brings about, ignores, or seduces the symbolic but does not produce it, the subject of abjection is eminently productive of culture. Its symptom is the rejection and reconstruction of languages (Kristeva, 1982, p. 45).

The attempt to expel this non-language from the body is evident in the events discussed previously; Arthur spews possibly the worst insult he could muster—Fucking Faggot—from across the parking lot. He invests his slur with all of the anger that had been building inside, combined with what he undoubtedly sees as an insult to my

... notion of masculinity. In using the term ‘faggot’ he both vents his anger, aggressively reaffirming his male-ness while simultaneously challenging mine. He breaks his silence at a distance, creating a divide between he and myself: between self and ‘other.’

Robert refuses language as his body performs the opposite of what is instructed. In fact, he appropriates the gesture that had earlier been requested of him. He rejects the language of submission, reconstructing his stance as an act of defiance. While Arthur eventually breaks this tension—in fact he has to in order to reaffirm his sense of self—Robert remains silent. His body becomes language, becomes linguistic, is reduced to a sign. Literally becoming ‘I.’

Amie negates, then confesses to her negation, her refusal. Her confession acknowledges the critical, performed nature of her silence, allowing the act to resonate within the classroom, as opposed to the distance that is enacted by Arthur and Robert. Amie reterritorializes her own deterritorializing action—a self-negating abjection that closes the loop between rejection and reconstruction.

These versions of abjection each rely upon the linguistic mechanism, just as the bulimic must eat in order to vomit. Swallowing one's tongue, only to regurgitate later in public. It would seem that within these descriptions there is nothing outside of language. Each silence is eventually registered through a linguistic act. Language has embedded itself within the body, influencing the various interactions. What once might have been a symbiotic relationship has since soured. Language has become virus.

William S. Burroughs describes the process by which language has become parasite in Nova Express (1964). Initially existing harmoniously within the body, language gradually became embedded within the human organism, just as the flu virus might have once been a healthy lung cell. “From symbiosis to parasitism is a short step” (Burroughs, 2002, p. 208). Pulsing with the rhythm of the heart,
reverberating in the lungs, language is omnipresent, eliminating the possibility of silence.

Burroughs temporarily disables the viral nature of language through his use of ‘cut-ups.’ Disrupting text — the code — through random interaction, resulting in passages of nonsense, silencing logic. These students disrupt the ordering of language through a performed silence, nonetheless encoding responses upon their bodies. Language is code, contrary to what Deleuze and Guattari write. It is a code that transposes itself onto, into the body. Line up for the bus. Stand for the pledge. React to this work of art. The abjected, refused language comes back to fester within the organism of origin. In doing so it both are transformed. Language utilizes code and performs it, distorts it, but at the same time language is distorted by code. The body uses language and language uses the body. Suppression of language is registered on the body. It may be that these distinctions are blurred indefinitely. Body/language are deterritorialized.

**art education and silent bodies**

Education is often described as if it were a tool, one that allows students access to bright futures through the development of knowledge and self-worth. Interpreting language as virus in this process represents a much different operation at work; the virus works from within a cell, disabling the predetermined means of reproduction through alteration of the genetic code, producing infected progeny. “Successful infection requires transfer of the genetic information of the virus from the external environment to the interior of the cell with the conversion of the genome to a form suitable to allow expression” (Smith and Ritchie, 1980, 116). The body resists infection, but is fooled by viral trickery. The teacher attempts to order — infect — the student, who resists through silence. Language is insidious. The body eventually succumbs. The interaction between the body and language, cell and virus, implies a relationship based upon constant deterritorialization and reterritorialization, similar to the interaction described by Deleuze and Guattari in their famous description of wasp and orchid. “We form a rhizome with our viruses” (1980, p.10).

Education in this sense is as much weapon as tool, relying upon language to deterritorialize as orders reterritorialize the body of the student. In the case of many viral strains, successful infection results in the eventual death of the host. *Silence = Death*, the Gran Fury poster states, although Cage (1962) suggests that there is no silence, even in death. There simply is no receiver. What of the students who never speak in class? Is this a death of knowledge, of language? Are they to be considered failures of the educational system, or do they represent the effect of a system of language which orders — reterritorializes — without thinking of the bodies which have been deterritorialized in the process?

The space between the binary verbal-nonverbal dichotomy should be explored as an aesthetic approach in the visual art classroom, as students may find opportunities for responses that resonate at multiple levels: personal, social, political. The performativity of silence creates possibilities for breaking the binary ordering of language as described by Deleuze and Guattari, acknowledging the often-overlooked role that individual bodies play in classroom interaction. Approaches such as the cut-ups carried out by Burroughs — closely related to the montage projects that are quite common in art classrooms — might begin to open up spaces for silence in the classroom, a silence that exists between modes of knowing, between the binary logic of language and body.

Conceiving of montage as a practice that disrupts linguistic ordering points to the existence of silence in art education practice. This is not a new vocabulary to be learned, not a ‘radical’ critique of
Playing it Safe in the Artroom

Donalyn Heise

As a university supervisor, I have the opportunity to observe preservice teachers as they fulfill their student teaching practicum. Part of my task is to assess their performance, including their competence in content, instructional strategies, classroom management and organization. Some of my student teachers deliver art programs that emphasize media, processes, elements and principles. Many also focus on historical and critical inquiry. Some student teachers have already developed effective classroom management and organizational strategies. But is this evidence of quality art education that will prepare students for life’s challenges? Are we denying students the opportunity to experience the transformative properties of arts education when we impose too much control on the environment? Are we playing it safe in the classroom rather than personalizing learning and dealing with real life issues? Coming to school ready to learn currently means more than just food in their stomachs and shoes on their feet. It may mean dealing with tough issues, such as the threat of terrorism, abuse, oppression, isolation, fear, racism, prejudices and intolerance. These are the silences in art education. Silence that becomes the norm is what Freire (1970) calls a “culture of silence” that eventually reflects one’s subordinate position. Meanwhile, art educators wonder why students are not motivated to learn about content such as the Italian Renaissance or French Impressionist painting.
DBAE. This is not a push for Visual Culture, although it is about the visual that takes place in the classroom (usually outside of the vision of the pushers). This is a shift in perception, an ear that performs beyond its limits, or an eye that hears. This is a synaesthetics.

Art educators have much to learn from those who refuse to speak, students who stand when asked to sit, students who defy the dictatorial impulse available to all educators, students who remain mute when expected to scream. This embodied silence has the potential to re-order, to open new possibilities for critique and creation, to inform our practice more than hearing the echoes of our own voices in the classroom.

Notes

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References


As a university supervisor, I have the opportunity to observe preservice teachers as they fulfill their student teaching practicum. Part of my task is to assess their performance, including their competence in content, instructional strategies, classroom management and organization. Some of my student teachers deliver art programs that emphasize media, processes, elements and principles. Many also focus on historical and critical inquiry. Some student teachers have already developed effective classroom management and organizational strategies. But is this evidence of quality art education that will prepare students for life's challenges? Are we denying students the opportunity to experience the transformative properties of arts education when we impose too much control on the environment? Are we playing it safe in the classroom rather than personalizing learning and dealing with real life issues? Coming to school ready to learn currently means more than just food in their stomachs and shoes on their feet. It may mean dealing with tough issues, such as the threat of terrorism, abuse, oppression, isolation, fear, racism, prejudices and intolerance. These are the silences in art education. Silence that becomes the norm is what Freire (1970) calls a "culture of silence" that eventually reflects one's subordinate position. Meanwhile, art educators wonder why students are not motivated to learn about content such as the Italian Renaissance or French Impressionist painting.
As educators we make a commitment to prepare future generations to participate effectively in our emerging political and social democracy. John Dewey (1916) states that the classroom is a microcosm for society and that we can provide experiences that provide habits of mind for full participation. This requires the ability to engage in civic dialogue and to have a deep understanding of ourselves in relation to our world. Yet students do not always perceive our schools as having connections to real life issues. Victor Lowenfeld (1982) said, "Students consider education primarily as the imposition of already established truths, with little or no concern paid to their personal needs or desires. There is no course aimed at providing the high school student with knowledge about himself, his own struggle in society, or even about the dreams he may have for the future (p. 398).

My observations and consultations with student teachers and cooperating teachers have supplied me with additional information on current practices in arts education. During a painting lesson that integrated Japanese landscapes, one disgruntled sixth grader sat at her desk and refused to participate. When approached by the art teacher, the unmotivated student rolled her eyes and exclaimed, "What do I care, those aren't my people!" This statement is a loud cry for thematic, inclusive, cross-cultural curriculum that personalizes the art experience for all learners. In some local school districts, elementary students receive art instruction approximately one hour each week. If the art teacher introduces one culture per lesson, it could take 6 weeks before the teacher presents the student with a lesson that relates to her own culture. For this reason, it is important to understand how cross-cultural arts education can enhance learning when it includes the beliefs, values, and patterns that give meaning to our daily lives. Culture is not static, but a dynamic entity that is part of our personal, national, and global existence (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). Students need arts experiences that make connections to their own belief systems, their values, and traditions.

This article looks at ways that art classes may be unintentionally silencing the voices of individual students. Suggestions are given for encouraging empowerment and providing a nurturing environment for individual voices to be heard. Finally, a matrix of inquiry into the visual arts, including the moral dimensions of teaching is provided to guide this effort of inclusive curriculum.

The arts can be a place for helping us understand ourselves, our culture in relation our world, and to cope with the challenges of life. Indeed it is the best curriculum for understanding the human experience (Eisner, 2002). While the art room is often considered a place for stimulating creative and divergent thinking, many art rooms unintentionally promote silence by emphasizing classroom organization, management and formal instructional strategies that make weak connections to students' lives.

**We may promote silence in students when:**

We impose too much control.

We don't allow them to talk or share perspectives other than those that match our own.

We stress skill and technique over art interpretation and reflection.

We dictate what, when and how students will create rather than facilitate an environment that enriches the creative process.
Give students voice when:

We give students new tools for communication.

We provide nurturing environment, a safe place to share, where all voices are valued.

We encourage creative and critical dialog.

We give permission to disagree.

We teach how to engage in civic dialog with others with diverse perspectives.

Sit Still, Listen and Learn!

Classroom management is essential for effective teaching and learning (Dornek, 1992; Susi, 1989, 1993). I consistently witness classrooms with students sitting quietly at their desks creating artwork. Teachers have different systems for getting their attention. Some use a phrase; such as “Give me five.” Some teachers turn the lights off then back on. Control and authority is established in classrooms through clear expectations and routine, resulting in fewer discipline problems. While I agree that classroom management is extremely important, we may silence students when we control their environment to the point that we stifle their creativity and discourage personal and collective voice. Students often sit in rows, are not allowed to speak, and are directed to create in the style of a certain artist or art period. Art history or aesthetics is often integrated, but sometimes at a superficial level.

One teacher suggested that she had them sit in rows because it was safer than letting them “get out of control.” An alternative approach may be to facilitate problem-based environments where students work individually or in small groups, with each student’s role and objectives clearly defined.

Control over content is also observed at times in K12 classrooms. Constructivist learning theory focuses on student-centered learning with embedded assessment (Brooks & Brooks, 1993). New teachers’ attempts to create student-centered learning often means art activities that direct students to include their favorite color, or their favorite pet, rather than focus on larger concepts or universal themes that prompt critical or divergent thinking. Using a theme such as, “Art shows us more than one perspective on an idea, issue or emotion”, students can compare and contrast the work of Thomas Hart Benton’s *Hailstorm*, and Grant Wood’s *Stone City Iowa*, and engage in critical analysis to discover the different mood and perceptions of these mid-western landscapes. Students can engage in dialogue and create works of art communicating their own perspectives on an idea, issue or emotion.

Social reconstructivist focus on using the arts as stewards in the community, acting as change agents. They use the multiple cultures to focus on real issues and practice democratic action for the benefit of disenfranchised social and cultural groups. The results of social reconstruction reach outside the school setting to the larger community (Sleet & Grant, 1988; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Stuhr, 1994). Based on the theoretical framework of Freire (1970) who is well known for his emphasis on dialogue, empowerment and transformation through informed action; social reconstructivist focus primarily on social change. Henry Giroux (1988) builds on the work of Freire to encourage critical pedagogy and specifically dialogue that examines the social and political dominant ideologies propagated in educational institutions. He encourages critical pedagogy as a solution to transform a culture of silence into a culture of possibility, which leads to different forms of knowing.
As art educators in a multicultural, global society, we are further encouraged to critically examine the myths and assumptions which are a part of every culture (Bowers, 1974). Students can engage in comprehensive arts activities to identify and celebrate the unique aspects of their own culture, and use their cultural identity as a means for contrast and study of other cultural ideologies. When sharing information with the socially constructed realities of all groups, it is important that all power structures be diminished, and the aesthetic criteria of the non-dominant cultures be provided. In doing so, minority groups will more fully become a part of the classroom culture.

Age appropriate instructional strategies can be used that incorporate problem solving methodologies that involve real life issues. Very young students can feel empowered when they have choices and can affect change. For example, one-third grade class brainstormed responses to the prompts, 1) If I could change one thing about my school it would be... 2) One thing I can do about this situation is... After some deliberation, the class decided that the one problem that they wanted to focus on as a group was the problem of the location of the playground. They had to be quiet during recess because the playground was too near one building and the noise disturbed classes in progress. They then brainstormed solutions. A new playground location was decided upon, playground equipment designed, and models were created. The art teacher still taught principles and elements of design, art history, aesthetics, and discussed art in context. Students researched architecture and reported their findings of artists who created art in public spaces. The classroom teacher worked collaboratively to integrate math, language arts, and social sciences. Budgets were written, funding opportunities were discussed, and letters were written to administrators and board members. Throughout the project, the class engaged in dialog about the process. They discussed the democratic process, students were allowed to make choices, and all students participated. They experienced the necessary tension between individual and collective voice. As a result of the project, they were given permission to move their recess to a different time until funding could be obtained to build a new playground at the new location. Students felt empowered throughout the process.

Truth or Consequences?
College students in my art methods classes are sometimes skeptical of revealing their true feelings for fear of being wrong in class. We may silence students when we don’t allow them to talk, to share perspectives other than those that match our own. We may not realize that a hidden curriculum discourages diverse perspectives. I usually structure art critiques differently each time we have a class critique, and then we reflect on the art critique process. One critique model requires that all students participate. Another model allows a few students in class to dominate the conversations about art. Students reflect on advantages and disadvantages of each model so that they can make informed decisions as future educators. Many students are too concerned about the teacher’s viewpoint, or they seek a “right answer”. So, I purposefully strive to say as little as possible during critiques to allow student voices to flourish. This strategy almost backfired one time. When I finally spoke up during a class critique, suggesting that many do not view occupational folk arts as a viable art form and solicited student opinions on the matter, one student spoke up relieved. She finally admitted that she previously did not want to reveal that she did not accept occupational folk arts as appropriate art forms for arts education during our art critique, because she could tell from the nature of the conversation that the majority of those participating in the conversation did not feel the same way that she did. We then discussed the value of dialog and respect for differing perspectives, using art as example.
Not only should our art lessons allow for sharing of perspectives that do not match our own, it should include all individual students in the learning community. Lessons should reflect valuing a variety of arts experiences for all students and allow for multiple understandings through arts integration. For instance, there is more than one way to approach art, and there can be multiple meanings of art. Allowing students the opportunity to engage in dialog and share their own perspectives including personal experiences combined with aesthetic responses in a nurturing environment can encourage individual voice and empowerment. The teacher or facilitator should be sure that all perspectives are brought forth and maintain a neutral stance on the issue.

Silence can be perpetuated when we stress skill and technique over art interpretation and reflection. Elementary art is often taught on a tight schedule, sometimes in 30-40 minute sessions. When time is short, art education often consists of a short demonstration of the skill or technique required, directions or expectations, distribution of art materials, art making, then clean up. Closure with review of content is often omitted, along with art interpretation and reflection. Personalization of the learning experience is strained when students are rushed to create and see no connections to life or personal experience.

When we dictate what, when and how students will create rather than facilitate an environment that enriches the creative process, we silence students. As a college student in arts education, I was immersed in the Discipline-Based Arts Education approach. My early years as an art teacher were during the time when all administrators required all teachers to integrate a multicultural component to all lessons. I watched as all teachers scrambled to include something about any culture in their lessons, even at the risk of tokenism. Tokenism "not only trivializes the aesthetic production of all socio-cultural groups, but, what is worse, it avoids confronting the real challenge of critically apprehending the meaning of the object, artist, and process in the social-cultural context" (Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, and Wasson, 1992, p. 21). My first lessons consisted of art lessons that introduced students to one culture, then proceed to mimic their artistic creations, thereby trivializing their contributions. Fortunately, my education has evolved to thematic, cross-cultural, inclusive curriculum. Students should be active participants in problem solving, contributing members of a learning community. Art products should be original and reflect depth and breadth of content and process.

**Voice and Empowerment**

Playing it safe in the artroom may mean teaching art content with no connections to real life issues, and maintaining control over the environment. Teaching real art to real students means personalizing the learning to provide quality comprehensive arts education that prepares them for participation in a civil society. We empower students when we allow them to develop individual and collective voice. John Goodlad, et al. (1990) and colleagues discuss teaching as a moral endeavor and introduce a four part mission for a healthy democracy; (a) nurturing pedagogy, (b) access to knowledge for all, (c) encullurating the young in a social and political democracy, and (c) serving as stewards of schools.

We empower our students when we provide a nurturing environment, a safe place to share, where all voices are valued. It is essential to make connections to the larger world outside schools. We must model respect and help students share what they learn. Encourage creative and critical dialog. Explore pedagogical strategies that encourage creative and critical thinking and encourage stimulating intellectual conversations between students. This may include challenging students' existing pre-assumptions, creating innovative
anticipatory sets, or intriguing problem-based learning experiences. Give permission to disagree.

We live in a nation where people from all parts of the world contribute many cultural resources. Through the arts, we can teach students how to engage in civic dialogue with others with diverse perspectives. Therefore, it is appropriate to teach our students the habits of mind to function successfully in this democracy. The arts model democratic concepts such as respect, loyalty, patience, courage, self-respect, confidence, honesty, multiple, empathy and tolerance (Smith, 2000) and can provide access to knowledge for all students. They can provide rich learning opportunities for students who possess different learning styles, preferences, and abilities.

Cross-cultural art education does not mimic cultural art objects, nor does it focus on just one culture. Rather, it suggests we select on a universal theme and explore how different cultures express their responses to that theme (Chalmers, 1996). It addresses issues of voice, exclusion, and bias. Cross-cultural art education helps us to focus on “what is portrayed, what is written and communicated, whose voices are included and whose are silenced” (Hurwitz & Day, p. 35).

In order to insure that our democracy remains alive, we need to create authentic learning experiences in school that prepare students for real life. Enculturating the young into a social and political democracy includes practicing and modeling the democratic processes. The arts model how cultures pass down traditions from generation to generation.

Teachers have an obligation to be socially and politically active. The needs and rights of communities and the public good need to be protected. Serving as stewards of the schools means to confront key issues and standing up for what you believe in. It requires focusing on the tension between the individual and common good. Public art, censorship, and aesthetics are starting points for acting as stewards in the community. Helping teachers learn how to develop comprehensive arts curriculum that prepares students for success in a democracy can be challenging. The following process/content diagram is an example of a curriculum development tool used by classroom teachers integrating the arts.

**Inquiry into the Visual Arts**

The process/content diagram was developed by the Prairie Visions Nebraska Consortium for Arts Education as a guide for teachers developing comprehensive art curriculum that is thematic, cross-cultural, and inclusive (See the chart at the end of the essay). This matrix includes inquiry into the visual arts and the moral dimensions of teaching. These questions guide teachers as they select appropriate art images, design curriculum, and make connections to real life. It also contains the cultural, historical, critical, aesthetic, creative, and moral perspectives.

Over 100 teachers attending a summer professional development program in the Midwest received training on the characteristics of comprehensive arts education, including thematic, inquiry-based, cross-cultural, standards-based, curriculum development. Teachers worked in teams as they discovered the disciplines of art, including the cultural/historical perspective, the critical perspective, and aesthetic and technical/creative perspective. They were also introduced to the moral dimensions of teaching and the importance of preparing students for life in a democracy. A process/content diagram was distributed to guide teachers as they developed quality art-based curriculum.

Teachers worked in teams to design interdisciplinary units. One team used the process/content diagram to develop a unit on public sculpture. The theme of the unit was “Art commemorates important people or events in our lives.” The essential questions for the unit were:
1. How do we memorialize significant people or events in our lives?
2. What roles does art play in the collective memory of a society?
3. What is good art and who gets to decide?
4. How does art relate to a specific time/place or culture?
5. What is more important: artistic freedom or the collective good?

The questions on the process/content diagram helped teachers with the selection process in deciding which examples of public sculpture to include in the lesson. The question, “What am I going to choose to study?” or “Is this interesting to me?” may be a starting point for selecting images such as the following public sculpture: Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington monument. However, if we use the diagram as a guide, we may discover that further investigation and additional images may be necessary for introducing an inclusive curriculum. The Moral Perspective: Access to Learning For All says: Do my lessons allow multiple understandings through arts integration? I am not certain that the three images originally selected portray multiple understandings, rather a singular perspective. Another question on the Process/Content diagram: The Moral Perspective: Stewardship question asks: Do my choices allow students to feel ownership of their learning? With my current selection, will my Native American students feel ownership? Will these images communicate the theme of Art commemorates important events or people in our lives to all my students?

These questions may lead me to include images of other cultures. The three images selected represent monuments in our nation’s capital. All three images represent the singular perspective of white males, specifically our nation’s presidents’. While these images do demonstrate the theme of art (public art) commemorating important events or people in our lives, it would be good to create a more inclusive curriculum. So, in using the current example, the team added the Vietnam memorial, which was created by a young Asian female. It contrasted with the typical memorial in that it was not a statue of a recognizable figure, but a contemporary sculpture. They created a lesson that revealed the controversy and resolution of the competition and selection of the Vietnam memorial. They engaged in small group discussion surrounding democratic issues such as, who should decide, and how to resolve conflict. When reflecting on the enculturation of youth in a social and political democracy, it is important to help students understand the necessary tension between individual and collective voice. So in revisiting the question Do my lessons help students value the balance between the individual and the community? (Moral Perspective on the process/content diagram) educators designed art activities that confronted real world issues, and in an effort to help students see the larger view of the world. They designed a group community art project that allowed students to engage in problem solving. After designing the lesson, educators referred once again to the process/content diagram, but this time, it was used as a self-assessment tool. They reflected on the processes and content of the lesson. “Do my lessons encourage students to see a larger view of the world? Do my teaching methods allow students to engage in rich understandings at a variety of levels? Do my lessons provide access for all my students? Do my lessons connect art to life? If these questions can be answered favorably, then the lessons are most likely characteristic of an exemplary comprehensive arts unit.

The ideas suggested here are not intended to be prescriptive, nor is the process/content diagram meant to be linear. Educators can select any question on the diagram as a starting point for inquiry into the visual arts. It serves as a guide when developing meaningful art-based curriculum.
Conclusion

Many art classrooms teach art lessons that seem successful. Students behave and create art products that look similar. But we may be perpetuating silence of valued voices. Balaisis (1997) states that children “are easily silenced... and they often learn to internalize the censor and remain quiet” (p. 84). Comprehensive arts education can model democratic processes that prepare students for living in a global society. By providing real life learning experiences in an inclusive model we can teach students how to engage in civil dialog. The arts help us to discover our personal and collective identity. They can provide an avenue for expression, for nurturing our souls, and activating our individual and collective voice. In doing so, we are contributing to the safety of society by creating a new generation of students that will be the voice of our future.
References


The Web Metaphor

The world exists in a dynamic that can be described as a web. The moment that you are born, you become part of this web by your every move through space, every encounter with people, and every interaction with objects. Never ending but changing direction, never moving up or down but always laterally, the web progresses and grows continuously. This metaphor also describes the singular existence of all of us by outlining the experiences that help form us. From the common details to the formative moments in life, our lives are a series of cumulative experiences. These experiences connect and build one on another. In other words, life is a series of ands where no period exists. I wake up and read in the paper about a Joan Mitchell exhibition and feed my dog and talk to my husband about our days and drive to the studio and see charged thunder clouds and paint with a little more freedom (thinking of Joan Mitchell) and paint the drama of the thunder clouds and eat lunch and... Some moments may be stronger than others, but all of these ands describe our lives. Within these ands, one finds that no human can “be” alone; we all exist in relationship with one another and the world. The individual exists in connection with “what we see and who we are and what we do” (Lacy, 1995, p. 89). The relationships among people, places, and things give life significance and worth. In other words, making and noticing the connections through the ands produce meaning in life. From this philosophical attitude, I propose to explore the ands in relation to art, art making, and art education.

The Proposal

How does this meaning of the ands translate into describing the dynamics of art? Since art involves a past, a present, and a future of making artworks, presenting exhibitions, and participating in art experiences, the people, places, and objects connect to create an art system. The ands join the people, places, and objects to one another. My place in this system is as an art maker and an art educator. I am involved consciously in this system with my own experiences, beliefs, and biases, but I am not comfortable accepting the traditional definitions and static categories of my positions. For me, this stasis creates a silence of limited possibilities. Therefore, I want to reconceptualize this traditional system of categorizing in order to continue anding the art dynamic. By anding the art system, we recognize the interactions of the artworld and open the system to limitless, dynamic possibilities. So, I question the concepts and activities of art makers, art objects, art institutions, and audiences in Western society as part of my experience and exploration with the ands. In order to establish myself as a participant in the artworld, I first need to locate myself as an individual within the ideas of art maker, artworld, art, dialogue, aesthetics, and relationship. Therefore, what are the relationships that are the ands in my perceptions and experiences of the artworld?

This questioning became a focus in my life when I started my studies to earn my masters in art education. After a productive and creative year of painting, I had the opportunity to reflect on my art practice. Although I had had the freedom, luxury, and flexibility to paint three to four days a week, I also felt isolated and disconnected. In search of ways to connect to the community as an art maker, I began exploring how I wanted to participate in the artworld. This desire to
question the disparate, disconnected silence of the artworld grows as I investigate issues of art philosophy, education, museum ideology, curatorial practices, and contemporary art and as I participate in the world of art in my various roles. I have observed that the categories of the art dynamic's participants of art makers, art objects, displayers, and viewers were typically static. I grew to understand the usual interactions among these four traditional participants to be generally one of separateness, passivity, and silence. Ideas and dialogue become limited because museums, pedestals, and scholarly voices have relegated artwork outside of the everyday. The result keeps art primarily in the world of academia and the gallery system (Lacy, 1995).

Given this position that I wish to explore alternatives to the current art dynamic, I acknowledge that this approach creates limitations such as binary thinking of what is model versus everything else. I am aware of this problem yet feel it necessary to describe my position in this manner in order to create a shift in attitude of openness and possibility. French philosophers (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) have discussed this philosophical shift as a rhizomatic system. This metaphor describes the connections in life as a lateral root system, which can never die and exists in multiplicities. The system multiplies through a process of stasis and growth. By conceptualizing the art dynamic in this structure, the rhizome allows for my imagining a system that is not static but is open and fluid; therefore, I challenge static categories of art.

**Evolving Art Dynamics**

A generalized and simplified account of the current art system portrays the art maker creating an object, the displayer placing the object for viewing, and the viewer looking at it. The participants remain fixed in their designated roles, focus only upon the art object, and have limited dialogue. A diagram of this static system can be seen as the following:

![Figure 1: Static Art System](image)

Connections among the participants discreetly exist, and their dialogue is whispered if acknowledged at all. An example of the missed opportunities in this silenced and static art system is a reaction to an art exhibition in Marfa, Texas in August of 2002. An Iceland-born installation artist, Hynlour Hallsson, created an exhibition sponsored by the Chinati Foundation in which he graffitied a wall by a window in a converted slaughterhouse with phrases such as "The real axis of evil are Israel, USA, and the UK." With the anniversary of September 11, 2001 approaching, the townspeople were outraged by this artwork. Although Hallsson revealed in the article that these statements were taken from comments that he had heard or seen in Europe and not his own, the installation did not contextualize the loaded phrases. Instead of creating dialogue with the community about how the United States is seen by some people from other countries, Hallsson simply changed the words to "what they wanted to hear" (Yardley, 2002, p. 2). The window was covered and the text was altered to read, "The Axis of Evil is North Korea, Iraq, and Iran." Dialogue and communication ceased and silence returned. The groups for and against the art installation remained fixed in their viewpoints. The Chinati Foundation
and Hallsson missed a moment of public pedagogy regarding the various viewpoints and issues surrounding the Middle East crisis. As a result, the art dynamic became static.

An imagined interaction contrary to the events in Marfa multiplies and unfolds the art dynamic. In order to open dialogue, this new dynamic could have begun with information regarding the source of the material and questions asking how we think other countries view the United States. The Chinati group could have called a meeting to discuss the intent of the work where speaking and listening more possibly would have occurred. In other words, the art maker, displayers, and viewers could create an arena to grapple with this loaded issue. The installation supporters approached the events with a modern, binary way of thinking, which is “a way of thinking that rests on the delineation of differences as the foundation of all knowledge and therefore promotes hierarchy,” instead of a postmodern, and more specifically, feminist attitude that “deconstructs” this hierarchy and promotes exchange (Fox-Genovese, 1991, p.4). The writings of Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Suzanne Lacy inform my imagined scenario. Fox-Genovese challenges the individual’s place within a community in reference to feminist ideology of deconstructed delineated hierarchies. Similarly, Lacy describes a new genre public art with a goal of “open conversation in which one is obliged to listen and include voices” (Lacy, 1995, p. 36). Their approaches of including dialogue and requiring openness among participants in the art dynamic evolve the static structure to become a dynamic based on possibility.

The imagined art dynamic has the relationships of the participants connect in a fluid system. Additionally, by changing the participants into active verbs, the definitions open to allow an individual or multiple individuals to participate in the web of art.

Figure 2: Proposed Art Dynamic

In this model no one participant sees her/himself as fixed in a specific role. For example, the art maker constructs the art object and through that process, will step back to perceive the art object and act as viewer. She also will participate in contextualizing the object on display. Similarly, the displayer may spawn an idea for the art maker to construct an art object and thus participates in art making. As a result, the art experience forever evolves and moves, and the participants interact with one another in a literal and conceptual conversation.

Creating art is a shared activity among the participants of the art dynamic. Therefore, a single individual or several individuals actively participate in the art processes of making, communicating, displaying, and viewing art. Although differing realities and opinions exist, I suggest a connected art dynamic as a goal toward which we should work because “the world in order to be, must be in the process of being” (Friere & Faundez, 1989, p. 32). By focusing on process, the categories of describing the art experience shift from a static, silent system of people with specific, limited roles to a rhizomatic system with participants interchangeably engaged together in the processes of the art experience.
Definitions to Descriptions

With its many actions and participants, art functions as a social activity in the form of dialogue. Dialogue facilitates the rhizome's moving from a fixed to an adaptable system. As a society, we create definitions in order to help describe, clarify, and categorize ideas in our minds. This method of establishing meaning posits a sense of permanency and confinement, by setting up an equation of equality, i.e. what is or is not art. Although constraining, though at times very necessary, definitions limit dialogue due to the framework of a fixed equation; therefore, I propose to avoid stating static definitions and to offer my ideas as descriptions for a proposed art dynamic. Redescribing current ideas allows for new understandings and useful metaphors (Rorty, 1989, p. 9). These redescriptions will allow me to open discourse in order to explore my place in the artworld. Fixed definitions of art maker, art object, art making, displaying, viewing, and educating need to be set aside in order to imagine another art dynamic. My intention is to give these terms for me new and anding meaning in the dialogue of art because I want to be a more connected, more responsible participant in the art dynamic. Whether as an art maker, art educator, displayer, or viewer, anding the art dynamic allows me and others around me to move more fluidly among these roles.

The Art Experience as an Imagined Dynamic

Dialogue begins with an idea. Through listening and speaking, "the conjunction between the two is the crisis of learning and meaningful knowledge" (Garoian, 2001, p. 9). In order to expand the mind and to learn, the participants must listen as well as speak. Through questioning and dialogue meaning is created. Therefore, dialogue is an integral component in creating awareness of the ands within the art dynamic. My dialogue begins with two questions: what is a connected art system, and in what ways do I participate in the ands? I propose to explore the shift in attitude of accepting a system made up of a series of relationships among the participants who are art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing. This way of thinking about the art dynamic sees the art experience "not [only] built on a typology of materials, spaces, or artistic media, but rather on concepts of audience, relationship, communication, and political intention" (Lacy, 1995, p. 28). With this shift of attitude, the creativity is shared, and the interaction is anded meaning.

The importance of this idea lies in its implication for an active, connected system of existence. By viewing the system as relationships, all participants become empowered in the creative process. Individual as well as collective growth occurs through the acceptance that all participants are engaging in an open dialogue, which is physical, external, and internal. Conversation includes more than one voice; consequently, any conversation requires multiple viewpoints.

This attitude emphasizes the collective as well as the individual voice. If "individual rights [are] the product of collective life rather than its justification" a reconsideration of the relationship between the individual and the collective is needed (Fox-Genovese, 1991, p. 8). This reconsideration must allow for the importance of both the individual and a growing system. An openness results to create anded meaning and possibility. The same rethinking applies to the realm of art. By looking at the creation of art as shared power among the participants instead of as the singular product of the art maker, art becomes an aesthetic as well as a moral, economic, political, interpersonal, social, cultural, and spiritual experience. Redescribing the art dynamic of the twenty-first century as a series of relationships supports shared responsibility in the creative process. Multiple viewpoints, questions, ownership, and creativity become not only part of the product but also the processes of art.
My intention as an art maker, educator, displayer, and viewer is to challenge static categories within the art experience. Informed by my experiences as an abstract, formalist painter and a former elementary and middle school art teacher, I am engaged in the dialogue of rethinking the system. *Anding* gives life a connected sense of meaning and enables relationships to be created and shared; I want to be a part of this type of system. With the rethinking of every participant’s place and activity in the dynamic of art, ownership and possibility result. *Anding* the system produces relationships existing in and responding to and with the world in dialogue.

**Building a Philosophical Framework**

A connected art dynamic can only exist if a framework for discussion is established. In the sections that follow, I outline the philosophical theories of the artworld, the concepts of art, aesthetics, perception/recognition, and relationship. Every idea links to the previous one in order to explore the possibility of my proposed art dynamic. These theories will establish how to move from missing dialogue such as in Marfa to requiring active participation in the art experience. Engaging in dialogue with these theories establishes points of reference for a personal exploration. By starting with the idea of the artworld and moving into the notions of art, the art object, and relationship, I explore the philosophical underpinnings of my desire to rethink the art dynamic.

The metaphor of the rhizome establishes an understanding of the organization of the *anded* art dynamic. A rhizome is a plant such as grass that has a lateral root system. The blades of grass are offshoots of a web of roots that continually spread horizontally. As a result of constant outward growth, the rhizome does not die. Any part of the rhizome can and will connect with any other part. The growth of a tree contrasts this lateral root system. A tree roots downward and grows upward in a hierarchical orientation. The branches extend from the trunk that grows from the roots. The tree roots deep into the ground in a fixed state. The metaphor of the rhizome or tree can describe the art system. If the system exists in a tree-like organization, the participants and processes of the artworld become static. A viewer who accepts only the interpretation of an artwork that a curator has given in an exhibition is an example of a static, silent system. Conversely, if the art system exists as a rhizome, it becomes fluid and open. Connections, interactions, and movement occur among the participants and processes. I describe these links as the *ands* in the art dynamic. The *ands* may be formed for example by a wall text which includes questions for the viewer to answer to formulate a personal viewpoint. By *anding* the art system, we recognize the interactions of the artworld and open the system to limitless, dynamic possibilities.

The redescribed art dynamic cannot exist without the recognition of the concept of art. The word art encompasses a variety of meanings and associations. Although the word art primarily refers to an object, art also can be an act, an experience, an academic field, or a system encompassing all of these ideas. Art in association with visual art objects or performances brings to mind a range of images: perhaps Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*, Monet’s *Waterlilies*, Judy Chicago’s *Dinner Party*, Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper*, Helen Frankenthaler’s *Mountain and Sea*, and Guillermo Gomez-Peña’s *Temple of Confessions*. Although all are considered art, these art makers and art objects have many differences such as their media and intentions. Therefore, the question of what distinguishes an object as art is not easily answered. In our society, we label everything: art, non-art, work, play, functional, formal, secular, religious, and so on. Similarly, every object with which we interact has a name and perhaps a purpose. Some of these objects are called art. An enormous discourse surrounds the question “what is art?” Not everything is art, so where and what are the distinctions? I only propose to establish a description of art for the purposes of this paper.
To begin, art can only exist if we accept the existence of something called art. Without the acknowledgment that the concept of art exists, there would be no art. How does an object move from just being an object to being an artwork? When does a painting become more than just paint on canvas? A passage from Arthur Danto (1992) expresses this thought:

“And now Testadura, having hovered in the wings throughout this discussion, protests that *all he sees is paint*: a white painted oblong with a black line painted across it. And how right he really is: that is all he sees or that anybody can, we aesthetes included. So, if he asks us to show him what there is further to see, to demonstrate through pointing that this is an artwork (*Sea and Sky*), we cannot comply, for he has overlooked nothing (and it would be absurd to suppose he had, that there was something tiny we could point to and he, peering closely, say ‘So it is! A work of art after all!’). We cannot help him until he has mastered the *is of artistic identification* and so constitutes it a work of art. If he cannot achieve this, he will never look upon artworks; he will be like a child who sees sticks as sticks” (p. 430).

Until an individual accepts the idea of art, or “the is of artistic identification,” no art will exist for that person. Mastering the *is of art* entails accepting the existence of the actuality of art and being able to label an object as such. Although art is not something that one can always identify automatically, “the is of artistic identification” allows for the creation and discourse about objects set aside as art. A urinal turned upside down with the name R. Mutt painted on it may be just that to one person. On the other hand, Marcel Duchamp and many others consider this object not only art but also a catalyst for questioning concepts of “fine art” verses “low art.” This debate demonstrates that describing something as art requires subjectivity and a little faith, for art is an abstract concept. An object is considered art only if we describe it as such within a context and with intention. The “is of artistic identification” establishes the existence of the concept of art.

**The Artworld**

The acceptance of the reality of art begins with a knowledge of the “world” surrounding art. Danto (1992) states that “to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld” (p. 38). The artworld is comprised of the discourses, the places, the people, and the objects involved in the establishment of art. The artworld has a past, a present, and a probable future. Every individual's artworld is a bit different and this diversity continually "and's", but a generalization exists. The artworld includes all people, places, things, and events that respond to and act upon art. The artworld interacts in a form of a tree-like or rhizomatic system, but in order to best understand these systems, we need to accept the *is* of art and the artworld as a system of its relationships.

Within this identification of art and the artworld, my proposed art dynamic begins to develop. If art exists then the people engaged in the artworld must be participating in some sort of experience. Whether connected or acting separately, people determine the actuality of art and the artworld. Consequently, the web of experiencing, interacting, and discussing art can grow and evolve. From my perspective as art maker, I want to look again and redescribe the people and processes working within the artworld with the intention of identifying spaces for dialogue and the extinction of a static silence. A connection exists among the participants, ideas, actions, and objects in the art web. Therefore, what are the connections, who and what is involved, and what are the implications of articulating these relationships? First, though, in order to proceed further in the discussion of the connections, I must describe the meanings of the term art within the scope of this paper.
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Concepts of Art

Accepting the ideas of art and the artworld, the following section outlines my perspective of the label art as something we create and put aside as unique. Art makers produce art to be viewed and consumed. Institutions such as museums and galleries hold art for viewers to see, to experience, and possibly to reflect. Viewers choose to take time to see them, to have an experience, and perhaps to buy them. Likewise, the term art also can be used to elevate one act from another; for example, the art of eating, the art of making a deal, or the art of war. With these dynamics, one can discern that art is unique from non-art.

People view art as something special or unique. This “specialty” may hang on the wall, be used everyday as silverware, or describe an act, but to be labeled art requires a distinction. Ellen Dissanayake (1995) defines art as “making special.” She categorizes art as a behavior where “in whatever we are accustomed to call art, a specialness is tacitly or overtly acknowledged” (Dissanayake, 1995, p. 91-92). We change or add to the everyday an importance that makes it different from our present concept of reality. In other words, we separate art from what we consider ordinary in our worlds. Art is the process of making and doing something with the “presence of directive intent” (Dewey, 1934, p. 47). Art is something consciously created or perceived as special.

Although art may do many things such as allow for an escape, focus on beauty, or bring attention to a problem, everything labeled art is different and unique to an individual. Points of view decide what is labeled art and what is not. Art to one person may be just an object on the mantel to another. Therefore, we must remember that determining what is art is a continual dialogue of constructing and reconstructing. For example, with nontraditional media and performance aspects, the artwork of Guillermo Gomez-Pena deconstructs the idea of “fine art” that hangs on the wall. Then again, this artwork intends to engage participants in art by creating a special visual and intellectual experience. For example, in his installation/performance piece Temple of Confessions, Gomez-Pena has the viewer actively “confess” his racist thoughts and thus makes the viewer an active and integral component of his artwork. This confessing also is a catalyst for the viewer to reflect on his own prejudices. Temple of Confessions illustrates the multiple functions of art as social, ideological, and economical. Subsequently, these aspects encourage dialogue (Van Laar and Diepeveen, 1998, p.19-20). Allowing for change, discourse, and questioning, traditional and nontraditional art makers, art objects, displays, and viewers can activate the art dynamic.

How is Art?

If we describe art as making special, the next question is how does an object differentiate from being just an object to being an art object. John Dewey (1934) asks similar questions:

“How is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic? How is it that our everyday enjoyment of scenes and situations develops into the peculiar satisfaction that attends the experience which is emphatically esthetic? [Finally,] if artistic and esthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience, how shall we explain how and why it so generally fails to become explicit?” (p. 12-13)

One of the answers to these questions begins with the fact that art objects communicate. Whether the art is a performance, an installation, a painting, a drawing, a sculpture, etc., the art maker uses visual as well as other sensual forms of communication to express an idea and to prompt dialogue. In other words, “because objects of art are expressive, they communicate.... Because objects of art are expressive, they are a language. Rather they are many languages” (Dewey, 1934, p.104, 106). Art objects communicate through various
visual forms to express thoughts, emotions, interpretations, and experiences. This communication “depends on mutually understood assumptions” such as the existence of art and an artworld (Van Laar and Diepeveen, 1998, p. 39). Returning to the Marfa/Chinati example, dialogue was shut down into silence when the viewers responded angrily and the art maker and displayer changed the installation. If open dialogue were to have occurred in the proposed art dynamic as outlined previously, the art maker and displayer would have engaged the viewers in an active discussion explaining and questioning his viewpoints and intentions as well as listening to the viewers. As a result, the art maker and viewers would have become active creators of meaning. It is within these relationships and art processes that my proposed art dynamic exists. The dialogic characteristic of art resides in this responding, engaging, and projecting (Van Laar and Diepeveen, 1998). Regardless of the dialogue being quiet and unobservable or outspoken, the participants always exist in relation.

The dialogue of art begins because of the artistic and the aesthetic. Although they can be discussed independently of each other, these two concepts cannot exist separately; the artistic and the aesthetic interrelate to create an art experience. According to Dewey (1934), “‘artistic’ refers primarily to the act of production and ‘esthetic’ to that of perception” (p. 46). The art maker produces the art object through “a process of doing or making... Every art does something with some physical material, the body, or something outside the body, with or without the use of intervening tools, and with a view to production of something visible, audible, or tangible” (p. 47). The art maker creates an artistic object not only because of her intent to make special but also in the method she uses to create the art. The artistic represents the art maker’s point of view in connection with her physically creating the artwork. From developing ideas and constructing the art object, the artistic refers to the art making process of creation.

Art is not realized simply because the art maker intended it to be. As discussed previously, the art experience grows in a web and not a linear progression starting only with the art maker. The audience also participates in the creation of the artwork by interacting with the aesthetics of the object. As the artistic embodies primarily the art maker’s process of creating, aesthetic refers to the displayer’s and viewer’s standpoints of creating. The aesthetics of art entice a viewer to look at and to respond to the art object and its ideas, for “an artwork is not complete unless it earns a response from someone else, even if only silence” (Van Laar and Diepeveen, 1998, p.110). The aesthetics of an artwork allow for the communication of the artwork’s idea among the participants in dialogue. The balance of the artistic and the aesthetic works together as a catalyst to form meaning among the participants of the art experience. How is art? An object becomes art because of the relationship of its artistic and aesthetic qualities given to it by the participants.

The correlation between the artistic and aesthetic acts ands the art dynamic. Although individuals carry out all actions associated with the art experience, looking at the processes of the participants activates the interrelations of my proposed art dynamic, for “without the meaning of the verb that of the noun remains blank” (Dewey, 1934, p.51). One or more participants may engage in making, communicating, displaying, and viewing art. For example, the physical process of creation for an art maker of a particular art object often begins with the artistic tools of paint, metal, clay, charcoal, and so on. Having the technical ability to use these tools, the art maker forms a physical work to express ideas. While forming the art object, the art maker also acts as the viewer and often conceptualizes the displaying. The standard process of creating an art object entails acting upon the object, stepping back to perceive the object, and returning to change the product in order to reach a desired outcome. The act of displaying may be added
if the art maker conceptualizes or puts the object out for viewing. This creative process exemplifies the interdependence and fluidity of the artistic and aesthetic of making, displaying, and viewing the artwork for an individual. Consequently, the relationships between the art object and the acts of art making, displaying, and viewing combine to give import to the art object and art experience.

What is an Art Experience?

In general, an experience is "the result of interaction between a live creature and some aspect of the world in which he lives" (Dewey, 1934, p. 43-44). In art, a typical experience is the result of an interaction with an art object by the art maker, displayer, and viewer. The experiencing may be with the art making or perhaps viewing of the art object; these acts are part of social dialogue. The participant responding adds to the conversation by creating her own experience with the art object. Consequently, by actively engaging in these art processes, the participants create an art experience.

In order to discern the processes further and to have an experience with the object, the viewing must not merely be an act of recognition but an act of perception. Being able to attach a proper label on the object describes the act of recognition (Dewey, 1934, p. 53). Recognition becomes perception when the viewer does not merely recognize an object but "takes in" the object. The viewer is aware of light playing over the surface, colors, shapes, purposes, and meaning; in effect "there is an act of reconstructive doing, and consciousness becomes fresh and alive" (Dewey, 1934, p. 53). The act of perception again activates the proposed art dynamic. The creative process does not begin and end with the art maker’s production of the art object. This process is an ongoing activity among the art maker, art object, displayer, and viewer. Not only does the art maker participate in the creation but in order "to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience.... Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art... An act of abstraction, that is of extraction of what is significant, takes place" (Dewey, 1934, p. 54).

In the rhizomatic system, the creating of an art experience arises from the activities of all the participants. The displayer participates in the process of creation by taking the object and creating an environment and context for the object to be viewed. Through her choices, the displayer influences the art experience. The viewer "takes in" the object and its context not as a passive receiver in the creation of art but as a responsive participant. The art maker creates the actual object but her choices influence what the object says. The viewer/displayer brings to the artwork her own perceptions and history; as a result, the viewer/displayer combines her knowledge with the subject of the artwork to continue anding the work. This process with the art maker, displayer, and viewer translates into an on-going dialogue. Although the art experience may begin with any of the active participants, the actions connect in relationship to one another. Therefore, in order to truly have an art experience, the art maker, displayer, and viewer must take responsibility for the process of art. Within these relationships, anding exists because all participants contribute to the creation of an art experience.

How Are Relationships?

The previous paragraphs have established a framework within a Western context for the next step in rethinking the proposed art dynamic by establishing the expectation that more than the art maker is involved. The acceptance of an artworld establishes that art does exist. Art is described as making special, and the art object always possesses both artistic and aesthetic qualities. These characteristics of art establish a dynamic among the participants' art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing. These processes can come from the actions of one individual as with the art maker's displaying
and viewing but also from many individuals’ actions; every situation of art is unique to some extent. Every time art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing occur, the dynamic of the participants form a new *anding* to the web of art.

The relationships and the responsibility of the relationships rely among the people. Therefore, the proposed system has all four participants interacting in a series of relationships with flexible actions of making, communicating, displaying, and viewing in order for the creation of an art experience. It is within the connections among participants that the fluid art dynamic can be found. The philosophies of both Emmanuel Levinas and Martin Buber impact this idea of the art dynamic.

The Zen master asks the question: if a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? The philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas follows this same construction. Levinas asks, can a person exist without the recognition of an Other? Literally and physically, the answer to both questions is yes. On the other hand, to what purpose and with what meaning does the Self have if it is not in relation to an Other? Levinas (1982) states “it is banal to say we never exist in the singular. We are surrounded by beings and things which we maintain relations. Through sight, touch, sympathy, and common work, we are with others” (p. 58). In other words, we are not alone but exist in a system of relationships. Objects, places, and people interact and connect with individuals through the senses, emotions, and commonalities. As a result, the subject “I” exists because of the relationship with the Other.

The relationship with the Other gives life meaning and responsibility. This relationship begins with an invitation from the face. Levinas uses the metaphor of the “face: to describe the Other, for the “face” is the object to which we usually respond and holds the expression of the Self. Through language and the structure of language, the “face” allows the self to speak. Discourse is the authentic relationship with the Other “and more exactly, response or responsibility which is this authentic relationship” (Levinas, 1982, p. 88). In other words, by speaking, the “face” begins discourse and allows for possibility. By seeing and beginning a dialogue with the face, the self is accountable for the other because she is engaging in a personal dialogue. To restate, speaking “face” to “face,” the self and the other interact personally. Since “I” cannot exist without the recognition of the Other and “I consists in being able to respond to … the Other,” this interaction contains an ethical obligation (Levinas, 1969, p. 215). Possibility of experience and relationship occurs because accompanying the relation is this responsibility to respond to the Other. For example, a person has fallen on the ground and looks you in the eye for help. This face-to-face contact has established a feeling of obligation in you to respond. The ethical obligation exists not in your ability to do “right or wrong,” but only in your responsibility to respond by ignoring the person or holding out a helping hand. Therefore, the Self does not exist without the recognition of the Other, and the result is responsibility to the Other.

In this dynamic of discourse and responsibility, no player can exist without the acknowledgment from an Other. The relationships of the art maker with the art object with the viewer with the displayer create the existence of the individual participants; for example, “I” as art maker exists because of the recognition and thus the relationship with the Other as viewer. The singular is in reciprocal connection with the collective system consisting of the other participants.

In order to accept this idea, one must accept the art object as an equal participant in the system. As a signifier of the act of communicating, the art object has a “face.” Without this “face,” or surface of the object, the art experience could not exist. Art in the context of this paper is a visual experience. The physicality of the art object acts in the process of communicating. Within itself, the art object
communicates ideas such as an abstract expressionist artwork's focus on the connection of color and emotion or a socially oriented artwork's intention of arising awareness to women's inequalities in the artworld. With the art object's role as a significant participant, the processes of art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing interconnect. If the art object were only a catalyst for discussion, the participants would be removed from one another; no longer would the participants be in a "face-to-face" dialogue but speaking through the art object. Conversely, with the art object as an equal participant in the discourse, all of the participants remain in a personal, connected relationship. As a result, the art maker, the art object, the displayer, and the viewer are responsible for one another in their response to one another. The result is an ethical obligation to play an active role in the art experience. Although an art object literally cannot have an ethical obligation, allowing for the object to have a "face" in the dialogue prevents disruption in the interdependence of the participants and enables a fluid system. This perception of the art object and the system of relationships validate and the art dynamic.

As a result of this connection between the "Self" and "Other," two types of relationships form: the I-It and the I-You. These word pairs "establish a mode of existence" (Buber, 1970, p. 53). The philosopher Martin Buber suggests that we constantly exist in one of these paradigms. The I-It relationship is our response to what we recognize, objectify, label, and passively experience. "I see the tree" is an I-It relationship. A barrier separates the object from the subject. The response to the tree as recognizing it as a tree immediately binds the I to the I-It relationship. The past encompasses a series of actions, experiences, and/ or ideas that give an object meaning. Maintaining a separateness, the acts of giving meaning, labeling, using, or experiencing acknowledge the I-It relationship; this ability detaches the subject from the object keeps the relationship static. The I-It pair exists in the world of things, uses, and past experiences; "the I of the basic word I-It ... is ... surrounded by a multitude of 'contents,' has only a past and no present" (Buber, 1970, p. 63). We live most of the time in this paradigm, for to see something as more than as what we recognize, I-It changes to the relationship to I-You.

The I-You paradigm is a shared dynamic. When the I is connected to You, no borders exist in the relation. The subject-object dynamic transforms to subject-subject. Two people in love sitting in a quiet café engaged in conversation with the world lost to them experience the I-You paradigm. The consciousness of time ceases to exist when they know nothing else besides each other. Presently and in relation, they live in I-You. This relationship functions reciprocally, for "my You acts on me as I act on it" (Buber, 1970, p. 67). The I-You relationship is living in the moment without boundaries. On the other hand, no human can exist constantly in this present state. We function in life primarily as I-It; therefore, "without It a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human" (Buber, 1970, p. 85). The I-It transforms into the I-You and vice versa when the subject enters into or leaves the reciprocal relation. The subject does not see the Other as an object but as another subject. Sharing and responsibility describe this relationship. Through these dynamics, all humans exist and connect.

The fluid art dynamic exists in the I-You. The players must be in subject-subject relation to be a part of this proposed system. This participation allows the players to experience and to connect in the art process. Buber uses the term experiences in relation to I-It as a referent pertaining to past experiences not as experience in the present moment. For example, one might say "my experience with art museums ..." As stated previously, John Dewey uses the term experience to delineate seeing and creating art at the present moment. Although using the same term, both thinkers have definite but non-conflicting viewpoints of their intention in their rhetoric. Buber’s differentiation between I-It and I-
You becomes part of the art experience just as Dewey’s discrimination of recognition and perception allows for the art experience. Recognition is labeling an object, but perception is “taking in” an object’s physicality, purpose, and meaning. In order to be in the I-You relationship with art, the participants must be engaged not in recognition but perception. The participants bring past experiences to this act but labeling them as such does not exist in the moment. Perceiving a painting, a viewer loses consciousness of time and sees what only exists in the present moment. The art experience for both Buber and Dewey resides in I-You and the act of perception respectively. Anding the art dynamic brings both of these active concepts to the foreground.

Although the participants move in and out from recognition to perception, they constantly exist in relation to one another. One participant does not exist singularly but in connection with the others. By realizing these relationships and accepting this attitude, the processes link together through the relationships of the participants. When the participants exist in an I-You paradigm, the processes connect in a fluid, anded dynamic. Because I cannot exist without You, the participants have a responsibility to one another to remain connected. This responsibility creates meaning.

Exemplifying Anding?

Establishing the existence of art and the artworld and describing experience and relationships support the proposal of anding the art dynamic. This rethinking purports that the participants cannot exist without one another; they are connected by and. Their dynamics develop from being in a reciprocal relationship. The question then arises as to what these relationships look like in our contemporary artworld.

Anding requires a shift in attitude and an open mind. Accepting this proposed anded art dynamic implies that no one answer exists but multiple possibilities. The anded art dynamic acts as a living system growing and connecting through the rhizome. Like a map with multiple lines of flight, this system has no beginning or end, just multiplicities “proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25). By allowing for this art system, no one process is more important than another. Fluid movement occurs among art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing. Within this system a spectrum exists such as the art maker who remains isolated in her studio and connected to the “outside” world through personal relationships to the art maker whose medium is the interaction among a community. The ands always exist, but whether they are acknowledged is the question. My goal in this next section is to explore how we as art makers, displayers, viewers, and art educators in traditional settings can and the art dynamic.

In what follows, I will discuss three participants who foreground their work in an anded art system. Although any of the participants and their actions could be explored within the anded framework, I will foreground anding the art dynamic within the concept of educating. I will look at an art maker who uses education as part of the art making process, an after-school art program which used art making as part of the learning process, and end in reflecting on my own art practice. Therefore, in this discussion through three examples, anding the art dynamic becomes the goal of the participants.

Art Dynamic and Educating

One approach to anding the art dynamic encompasses education as part of the process. The word education generally conjures an image of a classroom with students sitting in rows listening to a teacher. This non-didactic scenario establishes a system where only one answer
exists. In my use of the term education, I use it in relation to a differing scenario. To me, education results from experiencing something. Educating describes the process of doing and undergoing, developing and integrating a sense of meaning (Dewey, 1934). Whether in the classroom, the museum, or on the street, people learn about life and themselves through questioning, answering, and curiosity. The educator, or person who facilitates the experience, seeks to invite and enable the learner to be directly involved in this endeavor of doing and undergoing. Art links people to the world, other people, and life issues. The art maker, the displacer, and the viewer have an obligation to initiate learning. If we accept Levnias' (1969) philosophy that I exist because of the relationship with the Other and therefore “I” has a responsibility to the Other then every participant in my envisioned art dynamic is accountable to the other participants. Although this obligation can be as little as the recognition from one another in order to create the most meaning and possibilities, the participants need to encourage the art experience. For example, the art maker can view her art not only as an object but also as the personal relationships with the object. The art maker, the displacer, and the viewer all can engage in dialogue. They share in building the art experience by recreating the art object. The responsibility of the participants to play an active role in the art experience supports a fluid art dynamic. The focus on the relationships of the participants allows for the development of meaning.

The art of Mierle Ukeles centers on raising awareness, dialogue, and action toward environmental issues. For example in 1976, she began a project called Touch Sanitation. Her goal was to draw attention to urban waste management issues and “garbage men.” In New York City over a span of a year, Ukeles shook the hands of 8500 sanitation workers. Documenting her movement on a map and recording her conversations about the workers’ stories, fears, and humiliations made her experience concrete. This performance work of art engaged not only the art maker but also the workers and other viewers in an experience. By undergoing the process of making this artwork, the participants acted in a dynamic art system of making connections among themselves and their physical world. Ukeles value and use of art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing create a transformative experience for the participants.

Aiding the art dynamic becomes tangible when the participants engage in an educational art experience of perception and action. Regarding the art dynamic as a system based on relationships fosters the creation of meaning, dialogue, and knowledge. The use of aiding and questioning encourages focus, reason, evaluation, and analysis. The art dynamic and educating keeps the art web growing and open.

Similarly, an after-school art program in Corpus Christi in February of 1999 called Connect to Community Through Art exemplifies the idea of making personal connections through the art making process. Museum educator Elizabeth Reese worked with this program, which proposed to explore local and global political issues with at-risk youth in a web-like or rhizomatic method where ideas were allowed to grow in a fluid manner. Beginning with visual images such as a sick person in a hospital, children playing, and a portrait of the slain tejano singer Selena, the group explored their perceptions of community, its governing systems, and the beliefs represented by these systems. Subsequently, the participants analyzed their ideas and visual images compared to how a local Texas artist, Joe Lopez, illustrated his experiences growing up in a barrio. Further connecting their experiences, the participants examined in discussions how local gang activity and memories of violence in their community paralleled global events such as the bloodshed in Kosovo and the Columbine tragedy. Finally, the youths and facilitators created drawings of their reactions to their explorations. The drawings were then hung in local exhibition spaces; in one space, visitors even were encouraged to create their own
drawings in response to the ideas of the show (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002). Through exploring, connecting, examining, and contributing, the participants and facilitators acted in an anded system. By not only acting as art makers, displayers, and viewers but also by allowing their ideas to grow in a fluid manner, the participants and facilitators became empowered in the creative process. Multiple viewpoints, questions, ownership, and creativity became the product and process of this program.

Anding My Art Practice

Finally as a part of this research, I need to evaluate how my art practice can be a place to explore how art makers operating within traditional settings may participate in an anded art dynamic. I am an art maker who creates paintings in a formalist manner. The problems that I address in my paintings are evoking emotion, creating a desire to investigate the visual world through color, and connecting to something greater than us. Although I have developed a technique of painting in order to convey these thoughts, I feel that I have more to give than solely creating an object and putting it "out there." My responsibility as an art maker is to encourage the full engagement and continuation of dialogue with my art. Frequently, I observe viewers at my open studio visits shut off because they "don't get it." I do not want people to be fearful of seeing something unrecognizable. I intentionally create abstract art so that my viewers will perceive the artwork instead of searching for the recognizable. Perception is the taking in of an object and recreating it for the self (Dewey, 1934). I encourage this type of viewing by actively denying the recognizable.

Although always searching for methods of exposing the ands, I have found three approaches that allow me to connect to my audience. One way for object-oriented art makers to communicate to their audience is through titles. I always have fought using titles in order to leave the interpretation of my paintings open to the viewer, but saying to your audience that "you can interpret this any way you want to" also closes off communication by not acknowledging the roles of the other participants (Van Laar and Diepeveen, 1998, p. 83). I feel that titles can be used to open possibilities. Titles can be concrete or abstract, but the goal is to foster communication. Titles can encourage this connection by their recognition of the relationship of making, communicating, displaying, and viewing. One way to open dialogue is to ask questions of your audience. Thus, I have begun to "title" my work with questions. Through one question or a series of two or more questions, I encourage my audience to participate in a virtual conversation with me. I began thinking of this titling system as simple questions such as where have you seen this red color? but felt that these simplistic questions did not encourage the viewer in critical thinking regarding the artwork. Therefore, this simple question could remain in order for the viewer to enter into the esthetic experience with the painting, but subsequent questions, such as how does your experience differ from my painting of red?, how is it the same?, and what is your reaction to this painting?, could continue deeper conversation with the art making. Questioning is a successful strategy in initiating dialogue and creating meaning, for "all knowledge begins from asking questions" (Freire, 1989, p. 34-35). Through questioning, the art maker invites the participant to engage with the work and foregrounds their relationship and interaction; the asking also acknowledges the participants as a valuable component to the art experience. As a result, the audience continues creating and responding to the artwork.

A second way for the art maker to remain an active participant is to incorporate the process behind the making of the artwork into the actual art object or into the displaying of it. Demonstrating how an object is made allows for a more personal experience with the artwork; the art does not seem as unfamiliar. This exposure of process may be
in the form of sketches, words, or hands-on activity, but despite the method, including the art process further engages and includes the audience in the art experience.

Similarly, active collaboration is another way of exposing connections with the other participants in the art web. Participating in the art making process by developing ideas and creating context links the art making to both displaying and viewing. Through active collaboration, the art maker values the thoughts, ideas, and contributions from other participants. Collaborations can be as simple as the art maker’s thinking about her audience as she creates an artwork to having a client, displayer, or other art maker participate in the art making process. For example, I have a client who commissioned me to create a large painting for over her fireplace in the living room. At first, she was shy about discussing her ideas because I was the “artist.” As I encouraged her to express her thoughts regarding color and composition, we became engaged in a dialogue about creating this painting. Although I actually painted the work, my client also collaborated with me through ideas and words in the making of the painting.

Whether the art maker is active in the community or developing dialogue from her studio, I believe that her consciously making connections and breaking silence contribute to creating meaning and possibility. By connecting with the audience through questions, including the art making process, or collaborating, the art maker intentionally can act in reciprocal relationships with her audience. Creating and looking at art shifts from a subject-object orientation to a subject-subject paradigm. With the accepting that I cannot exist without the recognition from the Other, the art maker has an obligation to the other participants in order to foster dialogue and interaction (Levinas, 1969). This encouraging of fully engaging with the art making develops further possibility and expanded meaning. For me, being aware of and actively cultivating the relationships of the art dynamic contributes to a successful art practice.

Mierle Ukeles, Connect to Community Through Art, and my practice demonstrate how anding the art dynamic becomes tangible when the participants engage in an educational art experience of perception and action. Regarding the art dynamic as a system based on relationships fosters the creation of meaning, dialogue, and knowledge. The use of anding and questioning encourages focus, reason, evaluation, and analysis. The art dynamic and educating keeps the art web growing and open.

The Rhizome Continues

These examples show people creating art within an integrated system of art making, communicating, displaying, and viewing. All of these processes contribute to the success of their work. By valuing the relationships of these processes and participants, these participants and the art dynamic. The rhizome continues to grow, to multiply, and to create possibilities.

The acknowledgment of a fluid system provides multiple entryways into understanding, possibility, and dialogue. The individual exists as a single part of a collective system. The art rhizome includes the best, the worst, and the in-between, and by allowing for all of these contributions, growth and activity occur. The goal of this fluid system is “to reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 3). The system connects the individual person, idea, or experience to another through subject-subject relationships. Accepting this existence as lateral and not hierarchical, perception opens to limitless possibilities. Through rhizomatic understandings and attitudes, the art maker, art object,
display, and viewer exist in reciprocal relation. *Anding* the art dynamic becomes the goal of the participants. No longer does the art experience subsist as definitions and endpoints; the *is* changes to *and*.

**And Its Implication**

Traditional and nontraditional art makers, displayers, viewers, and educators have a choice to acknowledge and to participate in a fluid art dynamic. Whether discussed as a web, a rhizome, or an *anded* dynamic, this system allows for multiple interpretations and possibilities in the art experience. Accepting the participants' interactions within a lateral system, the individual no longer acts alone but in a dynamic of obligated, reciprocal relations through connection between the Self and the Other (Levinas, 1969). Through the perceptions and actions of the participants, understanding, opportunity, and dialogue result. *Anding* the art dynamic describes a system where growth and possibility occur for and among the participants.

This article exists as a link in the art rhizome. I have challenged a static art system and proposed a fluid art dynamic. Through various philosophies, this proposed system emerged, and through examples of art making, the art dynamic became an actuality. I will challenge readers to discover their own methods of allowing for an active system of *andings*. Although I have taken the liberty of making general assumptions on a complex system, my asking questions and developing answers further expands the rhizome of the artworld. The readers also have participated in *anding* the art dynamic. Although conclusions are anti-rhizomatic, I can discuss the implication of participating in the art rhizome. Through *anding* the art dynamic, possibilities and growth occur. Every participant engages in and contributes to the art experience. In other words, the participants have ownership in their art experience. By requiring active participation and multiple voices, the participants engage in open dialogue, which creates a transformative experience. *Anding* the art dynamic further develops the making of meaning and possibility.

**Notes**

1. I acknowledge that this interaction occurs today. However, my intent in exploring issues of activating the art system is to make the connected system the norm instead of the exception.

2. I have chosen these examples not only for their impact on me but also for the range of ideas and visual constructions that they support.

**References**


Mediating on the Voiceless Words of the Invisible Other: Young Female Animé Fan Artists—Narratives of Gender Images

Jin-shiow Chen

The Onset of a Journey

My interest in youth animé/manga (Japanese animation and comics) culture in Taiwan began three years ago when my niece, Kitty, then 15 years old, showed me some photos of her cosplay performances and manga drawings (doujinshi) by her good friends. The beautiful pictures fascinated me but in all honesty, I was stunned that my own niece and her good friends were participating in ‘those exotic activities’. As far as I knew, my niece and her friends were good students—smart, creative and diligent in pursuing fine art as their majors in high school. I was disturbed by this incongruity and could only pretend politely to ask her about her involvement with “Comic Market/ComicWorld”, “Cosplay”, and “Doujinshi Sales”. Kitty explained a bit but grew impatient when I did not understand. She suggested that I attend a ComicWorld convention to find it was really like. I was apprehensive with concern. Kitty sensed my fear and said, “Don’t worry. These animé fans won’t eat you. They are not like what the mass media present as carnal savages, or violent, anti-social gangsters” (Kitty, Personal communication, May 24, 2000).

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**The Onset of a Journey**

My interest in youth animé/manga¹ (Japanese animation and comics) culture in Taiwan began three years ago when my niece, Kitty, then 15 years old, showed me some photos of her cosplay² performances and manga drawings (doujinshi³) by her good friends. The beautiful pictures fascinated me but in all honesty, I was stunned that my own niece and her good friends were participating in 'those exotic activities'. As far as I knew, my niece and her friends were good students—smart, creative and diligent in pursuing fine art as their majors in high school. I was disturbed by this incongruity and could only pretend politely to ask her about her involvement with "Comic Market/ComicWorld"⁴, "Cosplay", and "Doujinshi Sales". Kitty explained a bit but grew impatient when I did not understand. She suggested that I attend a ComicWorld convention to find it was really like. I was apprehensive with concern. Kitty sensed my fear and said, "Don't worry. These animé fans won't eat you. They are not like what the mass media present as carnal savages, or violent, anti-social gangsters" (Kitty, Personal communication, May, 24, 2000).

After three years of exploring this subculture, I have seen a group of youngsters active and energetic in artistic expression, striving for recognition among their peers. I met many fans and amateur artists⁵...
in the ComicWorld conventions who were willing to share their experience and knowledge of anime/manga art with me, an outsider. This subculture was completely committed to anime/manga art and open to anyone who shared similar interests. I realized that I had been misled by elitist values and mass media to perceive anime/manga fans as socially pathological, deviant, disreputable, and to a certain extent, dangerous "others". A cultural hierarchy underlies society and tends to marginalize and malign ideas and beliefs that are different from those in mainstream culture (Jenson, 1992; Lewis, 1992).

In Comic Markets/ComicWorld conventions, I was surprised to observe that the majority of anime/manga fans and amateur artists were young women in their mid-teens and mid-twenties. Kinsella (2000) considered that anime/manga fan culture was more a girls' culture than a boys'. This is not only because girls are in the majority but also because girls' manga and feminine expressions are the leading genres in the subculture. Little academic attention has been given to these young female fans and artists and their subculture. The mass media has jumped to expose this "secret land", lamenting how exotic, decadent and sensuous the culture is, spotlighting only those most flamboyant, bold and seductive female cosplayers and fanatics. These young female anime/manga fans and artists have been painted into sexualized images and have been labeled as dangerous "others". Obviously, they did no better than their grandmothers and great grandmothers to change their fate of being subordinate and objectified. They continue to remain invisible.

Last year, I talked to a few girls who are anime/manga fan artists. The two girls mentioned that they were glad that an academic scholar would listen to them and try to understand their interests and point of view. One of these girls explained, "It is always a great feeling to be respected for who you are and for what you like" (Personal communication, Nov. 11, 2002). As a female scholar and art education researcher, I have felt compelled to listen to these young female anime/manga fans and artists to let their story be told. Here two young female anime/manga fan artists share how they feel about gender issues as readers and creators of manga art who participate actively in ComicWorld conventions.

**Narrator 1: Tsukasa**

Tsukasa is 18 years old. She graduated from a senior high school and was accepted to a private university. She started to read mangas when she was 9 or 10 but it was not until she reached age 14 that she became serious about drawing manga characters. In the process of learning to draw manga, Tsukasa read a variety of manga including shonen manga (boys' manga), shojo manga (girls' manga), sci-fi and yaoi, (boy-love manga) and yuri (girl-love manga). Tsukasa confessed that she even read manga pornographies for personal curiosity. She found that many female characters in the genre are well drawn and beautifully presented. Apparently, the figure drawing techniques and skills still hold a great charm to attract Tsukasa's attention.

Recently Tsukasa seemed to lose her enthusiasm in manga/animé, and had switched her fondness to a group of Japanese pop singers named "V6". Now she would identify herself as a V6 fan more than a manga/animé fan. Utilizing V6 singers as the main characters of her manga doujinshis and storylines, Tsukasa was about to create a V6 doujin-site on the web, where V6 doujins (those who adore V6 as their idols) were able to post their "fannish" art work—manga doujinshis and novels. Among these six singers, Tsukasa most adored Ken Miyake and Hiroshi Nagano. These singers are young, thin, tender and good looking with feminine dispositions, very different from American stereotypes of strong, energetic, athletic, muscular, masculine,
handsome guys. In fact, their feminine dispositions are similar to those of “bishonen” (beautiful boys) in the manga fantasy worlds.

Like many V6 fans, Tsukasa depicted Ken Miyake in manga styles (see pictures #1, #2, #3 & #4) and base her novel characters on them in developing the stories. Tsukasa said she disliked V6 fans who liked to place themselves into the plots of their novels as if they were dating the V6 singers. She said:

For some reasons these fans tend to satisfy their own desires of being beloved by V6. That is it, fulfilling their own vanity and dreams. A lot of female fans like to make their own novels that way. I think that type of plotting is disgusting, in a certain aspect, and not enough to intrigue readers to explore deeper into the souls of the characters, the stories, and eventually the writer who develops the stories. In my own case, I prefer to develop stories totally from V6 singers, that is, a completely made-up story about these singers with no interface between the fantasy and the real worlds. (Tsukasa, personal communication, July 6, 2003)

To be able to do so, Tsukasa explained that she had to study these singers’ songs, performances, news reports, and other materials to get thorough information about each member’s personality, tastes, habits, philosophy, and values. In this aspect, Tsukasa believed that she was different from many other female fans who were crazy about V6 singers for their appearances only and tended to be indulged in novels with shallow romantic stories. Tsukasa found herself different from other girls in many aspects; for instance, she said:

Many girls start to care about their own looks, appearances, and body shape when reaching the age of 12 or 13. They begin to dream of falling in love. So they spend time learning to wear makeup or to dress up in order to make themselves prettier to attract boys. I am obviously naive in this respect. My mother had been pushing me to be on a diet to lose a little weight, so I could be more like a girl. It was not until recently that I tried a diet to lose
about ten pounds and began to care more about the way I dressed. Even so, I am not sure I will start a love romance that soon.

Indeed, Tsukasa lost a lot of weight and looked very different from when I met a year and half ago. She used to be a tomboy but had become more feminine and prettier. It seemed that she was comfortable with this, holding an optimistic view of the freedom in her life to come in college. Even so, Tsukasa emphasized that she was not used to wearing dresses or skirts but preferred shirts and jeans. And, she said she would continue to play male characters in the cosplay activities as before. Tsukasa recalled her most recent cosplay experience as follows:

Many people claim that we live in a multicultural society yet the general perception of gender roles in cosplay is still very conservative; that is, males play male characters and females play female characters. If you play a character of opposite gender, you may be viewed as a weird person. However, many of my favorite manga characters are male, and that is why I kept playing male characters in the cosplay activities. In the beginning, some of my friends questioned why I wanted to play male characters but later they found my masqueraded character to be cute and handsome, saying that my performances were fabulous. Thus, they accepted the roles I had tried to play and did not criticize me any more.

Tsukasa complained that there were some other experiences that were very unpleasant to her. She usually liked to put on costumes and make-up at home and then take the subway or bus to the ComicWorld conventions (Doujinshi conventions). She found many old men in the subways or buses leered at her as an alien and also gazed at her breasts. Tsukasa confessed if that happened once, she could simply not let it bother her, but it happened so many times that it made her irritated and mad. She thought to herself in anger, “Why can’t a girl with big breasts play a male character? I think it would better if I were a boy, then I would be free to play whatever male characters I like.” Tsukasa continued to complain that sometimes when she wore tighter shirts, many guys would gaze at her breasts. She felt irritated but could never understand why these guys were so interested in looking at her breasts. Tsukasa admitted that if she were a boy, she would not get into such an unpleasant situation.

Tsukasa mentioned many times in the interview that her personality, thinking and working behaviors were more like a male’s. I asked if she was influenced by Japanese mangas. She said it did not affect her that much because she read shonen and shojo mangas—many different types. She then explained what might be an unconscious influence from her parents. She told me that when her mother got pregnant, she kept praying, “I want a boy. I want a boy.” Tsukasa continued to say, “Maybe this unconscious prenatal influences led me to become so much like a boy—calm, straightforward, and rational.”

As mentioned earlier, Tsukasa began to care about her weight and appearance. However, no matter how many external changes she made, Tsukasa insisted that her personality and disposition did not change much. She described herself as a rational, calm, easygoing, straightforward and responsible person even through the changes she made. These sound like good personality traits yet she anticipated that they might hinder her in socializing with other female colleagues when entering her career life in the near future. Tsukasa explained as follows:

Unlike other girls, I don’t know much about intrigue concerning others or flirting or playing games. I am honest, tolerant and upright. I like to be frank with what I think, feel and believe. Some of my classmates have taken advantage of this, choosing me to do difficult work when they were in charge of a team. Also,
they liked to provoke misunderstandings among my friends, instigating some to be alienated from me. I would never be like that!

Tsukasa continued to say that in many Japanese manga, the heroines are not very smart but they are usually chased after by a swarm of guys. She said that some people would argue that these heroines were smart, kind, tender and beautiful, then they would be too perfect or too good to be true, and they would not attract many readers. Tsukasa doubted this explanation but she had to admit that she could not stop stupidly to earn the mercy of these guys. Tsukasa also explained that reading these manga without blaming these heroines for behaving so submissively, stupid, soft-minded and docile.

In a way, Tsukasa would prefer to be a wise and knowledgeable girl and be like a boy chasing after love to conquer all obstacles and fulfill her own dreams.

Narrator 2: Chiyong

Chiyong is an art-major undergraduate student about 20 years old. She started to read manga when she was in kindergarten. At that time she could not read much Chinese so she mainly looked at those pretty characters. When she was in seventh or eighth grade, *Sailor Moon* was very popular in Taiwan. Like many girls, Chiyong was attracted to those pretty female soldiers. Chiyong stated when she first saw the comic book, she was amazed that the lines and colors applied to the female manga characters were so delicate and beautiful. At that moment she was completely drawn in by its charms and decided to imitate the way these female soldiers were depicted. Chiyong said that her enthusiasm was highly aroused then, so she devoted a lot of time and effort to drawing these characters. She made great progress in drawing manga characters during this time.

Chiyong started by copying female manga characters, particularly those pretty and cute soldiers from *Sailor Moon*. To this day, her enthusiasm remains strong as can be seen in pictures #5 and #6. Almost 95 percent of Chiyong's figure drawings are female.

Chiyong did not just read shojyo manga but also shonen manga, boy-love manga, and girl-love manga. Her interest in drawing beautiful female manga characters did not limit her from reading other types of manga. However, Chiyong stated that in Taiwan's manga market, girl-love manga was not as popular as boy-love manga. Chiyong confessed that she was
much more interested in boy-love manga and had more accesses to it. This might create an illusion that boy-love manga is more favored than girl-love manga.

In the interview, Chiyong explained why she and many other girls like to read boy-love manga:

The main reason we girls like to read boy-love manga is that most of the characters are what we called “bishonen”. It is extremely pleasant and joyful to see so many beautiful boys all at the same time. To me, gay love is a symbol of ideal love that is beyond the limitation of traditional values. It is powerful to pursue true love no matter what would happen. In this aspect reading about bishonen could bring psychological satisfaction to many females. We read boy-love manga not because we are homosexual but because we come to experience how they escape the restraint of tradition and how they fulfill a deep love. There are many romance novels in the book markets but we are simply tired of reading the same ole stories constrained in the social structure and institutional values. (Chiyong, personal communication, July 18, 2003)

From the above statement, I came to understand that to many females, reading boy-love manga is a channel for running away from social oppression. Even though they might not be consciously aware of gender discrimination and patriarchal oppression of women in this society, they seek alternatives. It is also a good way for these young female readers to fulfill their desire for ideal love that they could never possess in this mundane world. In the interview, Chiyong did not attempt to criticize inequalities towards women in society for she did not sense these inequalities. She simply described her experience and observations from reading boy-love manga. Chiyong stated;

We have been educated to keep silent about sexual desire, behavior and love since we were very young. It would be shameful if we talk about it boldly, and that is why we do not dare to read boy-love mangas brazenly and openly. We read the boy-love and pornographic mangas, and talk about homosexual love and sexual love secretly behind our parents and teachers. I know that the love stories and characters in most boy-love mangas are beautified to feed on most females’ expectations. This type of ideal, utopian love is lifted up from the female dreams of love and aimed at arousing women’s fantasy for spiritual and psychological love. For this reason, boy-love manga may include scenes of making love but they are not as numerous, brazen, violent, or sadistic as those that appear in girl-love or pornographic mangas meant to appeal to male readers.

Japanese manga has created a type of male beauty that appeals so much to the female readers in Japan as well as in Taiwan. This type of male beauty is incarnated in beautiful boys, called “Bishonen” in Japanese. Bishonen possess feminine and tender, delicate qualities in appearance and personality, completely different from those macho, athletic, energetic, and muscular guys favored in popular American culture. Chiyong stated, “Taiwanese girls do not like guys who grow mustaches and body hair all over; that looks dirty and scary. They would like someone clean, elegant, tender and delicate”. Recently Chiyong attempted to depict male manga characters, and they were all bishonen (See pictures #7, 8, 9). Sometimes, it is a little difficult to distinguish her female characters from her male characters. They are so much alike.

As apparent in her manga artwork, Chiyong took the aesthetic values of the Japanese manga mainstream—qualities of elegant delicacy, softness, tenderness, mysterious femininity and romantic airs. No matter what gender of manga characters she depicted, they had to be
beautiful and romantic in Chiyong's terms. In a sense, these manga characters were very much like the mythical deities or spirits in nature—too beautiful, mysterious, gentle and delicate to be true. Chiyong stated frankly that she liked to see something femininely beautiful, so would she present everything as beautiful. She said, "It is because I cannot find something ideally beautiful in our real world that I put it into my manga artworks. I try my best to make my figures beautiful, pleasing to my eyes, my imagination and my psychological needs." (Chiyong, personal communication, July 18, 2003)

Digging for Deeper Meaning in the Narratives

Tsukasa’s and Chiyong’s descriptions gave insights into their gender identity that deserve special attention:

*Dreaming to be “He” vs. living in the ideal “She”*

Tsukasa and Chiyong expressed different gender identities, which were at opposite ends of the scale. Tsukasa identified herself as more similar to a boy while Chiyong adored the perfect beauty of a girl. The problem being—these two girls' sense of "self" was absent and voiceless from their narratives.

Tsukasa's story implies an apparent bias that males are better than the females in the following respects. (1) The male personality is seen as upright, rational, calm, and responsible. (2) The male is attributed qualities of diligent exploration and research into the deeper basis of meaning and thought—not simply caring about the external appearance and shallow romantic love as many girls do. (3) Males are attributed with the power of intelligence, capability and subjectivity—not just playing dumb, cute and charming to attract the mercy of others as many girls do. She internalized the male disposition and deprecated the female stereotype as being unintelligent, jealous, flirt, flighty, and overly concerned about personal appearance and romance. In a sense, Tsukasa was unconsciously dreaming to be a boy. From the bottom of her heart, she felt that being a boy would let her live a more free, convenient, and comfortable life in today's society.

In contrast, Chiyong made no attempt to become a boy. It seemed that she felt comfortable as a female. In the interview she made no complaint about being a girl and did not talk about gender inequality in society. Her manga artwork revealed a dream of being an ideal beauty—a beauty taken from the aesthetic values of commercial manga. She kept drawing manga characters of her ideal beauty to fill in the gap between the 'real she' and the ideal women constructed by the manga fantasy. Indeed, she lives in a fantasy mode of "she."
Creating an ideal gender by combining male and female characteristics

I found that "bishonen" were favored by both Tsukasa and Chiyong and by so many other girls in Taiwan. For them, a good-looking, handsome guy should be like a bishonen—a considerate male possessing the feminine, delicate, and gentle qualities. The image of "bishonen" is a symbol of a perfect person in whom the male and female characteristics are blended, making gender discrimination meaningless. It is implied that when a man is like a bishonen, there is no male chauvinism or domination.

Although anime/manga fantasy artists invented "bishonen," the aesthetic values of feminized masculinity they represent have become popular in the ideals of young Japanese and Taiwanese women. The female attention given to this ideally feminized masculinity has even influenced Japanese popular culture in its selection of male role models. For example Tsukasa's idols, the V6 singers, are physically similar to the "bishonen" ideal. Kraemer (2000) believed that the future of feminism in animated films is undoubtedly Japanese. As a matter of fact, Japanese popular culture is re-inventing the "third body" and shaping the future of gender roles.

Meditating on the Invisible

It mattered not whether these two girls identified with the male supremacy or ideal femininity; they did not speak directly about themselves. Their "self" was literally absent from their narratives, leaving their personal self-images completely invisible. Tsukasa and Chiyong did not intentionally try to hide themselves from being understood, they merely negated themselves unconsciously by identifying with the ideal "Other." The presumption underlying this on-going self-negation is that women are imperfect and inferior to men or as Freud would say; they are "defective males." According to Irigaray, women's self-negation is the result of the patriarchal unconscious.

Irigaray argued that the world is constructed with a shield of the male ego, enabling him to see his own reflection and causing the mother to accept this framework of the male ego while never presenting her true self. Irigaray perceived this neglect as equivalent to "matricide" (Sarup, 1993). Unfortunately, the daughter looks to the mother as if the world is made of one symbolic order in a monologic culture. Sarup (1993) explained Irigaray's concept of the Western imaginary.

Western culture, identity, logic and rationality are symbolically male, and the female is either the outside, the hole or the unsymbolizable residue. The feminine always finds itself defined as deficiency, imitation or lack. (p. 119)

Irigaray's psychoanalysis of Western culture explains the female situation in Taiwan too. Women's inferiority and abandonment are similar in both the West and the East from the past through the present. The more complicated and sophisticated the world becomes, the greater the social division between men and women. Some people are convinced that women have enjoyed equality in pursuing their education, career and social lives and have been able to compete with their male counterparts. Female images have been idealized for young women, and our mass culture is saturated with images of femininity. Chiyong's narrative illustrates the paradoxical celebration of the female image and its ideal femininity in postmodern society. Chiyong did not complain about her social status as a young woman, yet she was aware of her imperfection and compensated by indulging herself in the anime fantasy of ideal beauty. Chiyong is still alienated from her self. Instead of identifying with male superiority, she devoted herself to ideal femininity as presented in the popular anime/manga industry.

This situation can be explained by Bartky's (1990) notion of "feminine narcissism" (p. 37), a false consciousness of femininity. Bartky (1990) explained that modern industrial societies have developed a new
form of dominance, “capitalist patriarchy”, emphasizing normative femininity that focuses on women’s body for its sexuality instead of its duties and obligations. Through the growing influence of visual media, “images of normative femininity, it might be ventured, have replaced the religiously oriented tracts of the past” (Bartky, 1990, p. 80). New standards of female beauty have been invented, haunting many women with a pervasive feeling of “bodily deficiency”. Bartky perceives this “fashion-beauty complex”, which is often internalized into a woman’s “other” bodily self, causing the “self” to struggle toward self-actualization and wholesome affirmation of the body image. The “fashion-beauty complex” provides opportunities for narcissistic indulgence, deprecating woman’s self body image and femininity. Bartky’s fashion-beauty complex refers to images of perfect female beauty presented by real models, but this same fashion-beauty complex can be applied to the ideal female beauty presented by popular anime/manga. Capitalist patriarchal dominance has utilized various cultural agencies to shape women’s sense of self, deepening feminine anxiety to the point of self-estrangement and self-alienation. Under this patriarchal dominance women are not only inferior, but they eventually become capitalist products.

In recent years, feminist researchers have challenged “the view of women as passive consumers manipulated into desiring commodities” (Strinati, 2003, p.217). They have raised a new notion of cultural consumption, “Cultural Populism”, in order to emphasize that female consumers play an active role in the process of cultural production. Stacey (1994) explained that consumption should be perceived as “a site of negotiated meanings, of resistance and of appropriation as well as of subjection and exploitation” (p.189). As commonly seen in fan culture, media fans purchase and internally digest popular media texts they consume to produce their own work. This is especially seen in female-oriented fan communities that make their own interpretation of sexuality, legitimizing their own feminine values in contrast to dominant patriarchal values (Fiske, 1989; Fiske, 1992; Radway, 1984). In Japan, anime/manga fans and amateur artists like to produce sexually explicit themes in their manga doujinshi as a specific response to the highly gendered structure of commercial boys’ and girls’ manga. Kinsella (2000) described distinctive genres of amateur manga parody, yaoi, and Lolicom as having “betrayed a widespread fixation with male and female gender types and sexuality” (p.11). Anime/manga critics have also stated that the dominance of “sexual themes” in anime/manga fan art is manipulated as a creative impetus for change in the gender politics of society.

From Kinsella’s viewpoint, anime/manga fan art is a powerful vehicle for fans and artists to remodel the social and political construction of gender and sexuality in society. As found in this study, “bishonen” anime/manga characters invented for yaoi manga have been very popular among girl fans. Such popularity has led the Japanese anime/manga industry to adjust styles of male characters to please a greater number of female readers’ tastes. Popular culture in Japan as also promoted those with bishonen features as male role models. A women’s gaze used to be forbidden but now it is mildly forcing cultural change, reinventing gender roles. Japanese anime/manga culture has been prevalent with feminine privileges. It gives a gaze of liberation. Every bishonen is subject to female free will, as these female fans can gaze at these images and create their own narratives. They can appropriate images of their idols and rearrange them into their own favorite types whenever they want. For instance, we see Tsukasa’s idols, the V6 singers, drawn as cute effeminate boys (see picture #1, 2, 3, and 4) that are in a sense, male dolls that Tsukasa can play with and control. Similarly, we find effeminate young men in Chiyong’s drawings (see picture #7, 8, 9) who all shy away from the spectator’s gaze. It is the viewer who has the power to gaze at them. In contrast, when we look
at the young women in Chyong’s other drawings (see picture #5 and 6), we are stunned because they gaze at us. These female characters—gaze at us—spectators—as if they have the control and power in the world. The point is that young girls in anime/manga fan culture have empowered themselves, legitimizing their own type of girls' culture and feminine values.

A Stop

An ancient Chinese proverb says, “Silence is often more powerful than voices; the hidden meanings between lines are sometimes more significant than the written ones”. To be able to acquire crucial knowledge and wisdom, a reader or a listener needs to unravel the multiple textual layers in the narratives and interwoven context. Thus far, I have examined two insightful stories—visual and literal narratives—unraveling many invisible threads and implicit drives. I am also sure that what I envisioned in this study could never be thorough enough for there are certain invisible aspects still left untouched and voices yet unheard. It is for me, the narrator of this study, to leave these areas of silence to others to seek for more meaning and insight. Along the journey, I have given these two young anime/manga fan artists great encouragement and appreciation, but I now realize that my own feminist consciousness has been enforced through the stories and artwork of Tsukasa and Chiyong and for that I give thanks.

Notes

1 Anime is a short form for “animation” and has been recognized as any animation made in Japan. Manga is the term used for Japanese comic books. Manga is not a synonym for anime, but many anime movies are adapted from mangas so that the visual style in both media remains similar. Thus in this study, anime/manga is used to refer to distinct visual style.

2 Cosplay is a Japanese fan term for “Costume Play” and is similar to the western Masquerade (Santoso, 1998). Cosplay emerged in the late 1980s, and its popularity has been escalating so rapidly that anime conventions cannot be held without it.

3 Doujinshi is a Japanese term used to refer to coterie or self-published fanzines distributed within specific groups or communities. Although doujinshi becomes well-known in manga fan culture, it is also used to refer to other media such as self-published novels, stories and sci-fiction. Thus, in this study manga doujinshi will be used to emphasize those manga pamphlets or magazines that manga fans or amateur artists publish. Along the growth of the commercial manga industry, the number of doujinshi artists and fans printing materials of amateur manga increased (Kinsella, 2000).

4 Comic Market (also known by the abbreviations Comiket and Comike) is ostensibly a voluntary, non-profit making organization. It is held in the form of a convention where anime/manga fan art and amateur manga could be bought, sold, displayed or exchanged. In Taiwan, it is called ComicWorld or Doujinshis Sale Convention.

5 The anime/manga fan communities (also called anime fandom) outside of Japan have been growing gradually since the 1970s. In the anime fandom, almost all fans are potential artists who make and publish their own anime/manga materials (doujinshi) for circulation in fan organized clubs and conventions. In this study, these artists are called in several terms such as anime/manga fan artists, amateur artists, amateur anime/manga artists, or manga doujinshi artists.
6 Yaoi means boy/boy love stories, a kind of erotic manga that features gay relationships between male characters. Yaoi was a genre emerging from female fanzines. In yaoi, male characters are often the kind of “bishonen” (beautiful boys”). Yaoi manga seems quite popular among heterosexual girls of Taiwanese culture.

7 Yuri means girl/girl love stories, a kind of erotic manga that features lesbian relationships between female characters.

8 This term is used by Waugh (1998) in his article, “The Third Body,” to refer to the “gale subjects” that are invented in gay male narrative film. In this study, I apply this term to mean the effeminate boys invented by Japanese anime/manga, also called bishonens, as an ideal gender type, that is different from the first gender, men, and the second gender, women.

9 Parody is a genre of manga doujinshi, or amateur manga in which the fan artists re-write or revise published commercial manga stories and characters. Many manga critics have criticized that those fan artists who create parody types of amateur manga are not talented enough to write original.

10 Lolicom is an abbreviation of Loita complex. Lolita complex is used to refer to the theme of sexual obsession with young pre-pubescent girls. Lolicom manga usually features a young girlish heroine with large eyes and a childish face, but voluptuous body (Kinslella, 2000).

References


Imaged Voices—
Envisioned Landscapes:
Storylines of Information-Age Girls and Young Women

Marjorie Manifold

In Information Age societies around the world, adolescents are storylining—that is, creating and sharing their own stories and images of who they are and how they would like to be in the world. The youth meet in real or cyber spaces to plan, write, and illustrate stories that incorporate either originally conceived characters or adapt characters from published sources. Insofar as these young people intimately identify with the characters of their stories, storylining may be understood as a kind of socio-aesthetic play. By projecting pieces of themselves into the fictive characters of the collaborative story, they are practicing, correcting, and mastering concepts of self in relationship to others. Simultaneously, their imaged voices are filling the vast spaces of silence between those versions of society presented by traditions of reality and those versions their stories suggest as possibility. Indeed, they are conceptualizing new selves and social environments of the 21st century.

Introduction to an Information-Age Youth Culture

My interest in storylining behaviors and expressions began several years ago with a retrospective inquiry into the early cyber-play activities of my daughter, Josephina, and her friends. Born in 1980, Josephina was a first generation Information-Age1 child. As she entered early adolescence, she, like many of her peers, seemed to spend a great deal of her free time interacting with other youth via computer communications. Much of this communication involved little more than gossipy exchanges conveyed through instant messages or e-mails. Eventually, however, simple conversation evolved into collaborative endeavors of creative writing and storytelling among the group of female friends who identified themselves as members of an exclusive community they called The Trinity Group2.

These young people became the gatekeepers for my explorations. The initial data for this study came from conversations and both formal and informal interviews with three of the young women who had belonged to the original Trinity Group. My investigations quickly expanded to include dozens of other young storyline authors and artists whom they introduced me to or whom I discovered through Internet searches. Data collected from these new subjects included sample images and stories downloaded from their publicly posted web pages, person-to-person e-mail exchanges and interviews, and information copied or downloaded from their online journals (blogs). Throughout the latter period of data collection, there was an effort made to identify, through active questioning and passive reading of online postings, subjects who began their present writing or art-making by storylining in early adolescence. Interview questions included several aimed at eliciting reflective responses concerning the evolutionary process of storylining and the subjects’ perceptions regarding their aesthetic preferences and development, conceptualization of self and society, and sense of personal growth.

What emerged from the investigation was an awareness of the global nature of this creative socio-aesthetic phenomenon. Around the world, adolescent girls and (to a somewhat lesser degree) boys, who are permitted freedom of mobility and/or access to computers, are
gathering in real and cyber spaces to create and share stories whose heroes may defy the mainstream cultural conventions of gendered-role-relationships and aesthetic traditions within the young author/artists’ local societies (Chen, 2003; Manifold, 2003; in press). The activity may begin when small groups of children, who know one another from the neighborhood playground or classroom and who share a common interest, gather together online to converse and create story plays; or, individual children may seek out and join web-based storyline groups. In this latter case, the child may never actually meet his/her storyline playmates.

As in many role-playing game scenarios, a particular storyline is usually initiated by a player-participant op (or operator), who establishes basic guidelines for the creation of characters and, consequently, loosely defines the parameters of stories action. So, for example, when a Trinity Group op dictated that each member of the group “come up with a character that is based loosely off of you,” the selection of an appropriate character was not taken lightly. Each understood that basing a character on oneself was “far more difficult than it sounds,” (Courtney, personal correspondence, February 19, 2001). Often this involved the identification of a perceived flaw in one’s own personality or physical self, then inventing a fictive character capable of overcoming, working around, or otherwise manifesting freedom from a similar flaw. The fictive personas, who might appear as other genders or species5, don fantastic forms, such as unicorns or cyborgs, or possess superhuman/supernatural powers, such as the ability to read minds or fly, were placed in situations which forced them to conceptualized viable solutions to everyday problems. Regardless of how theatrical the invented story characters appeared, these adolescent storyliners understood the stuff of creative manipulation to be their own undeveloped, inadequate, undesirable, or wished-for attributes. Thus, the invented story served as a safe place for experimenting with real self-possibilities.

Storyline authors flesh-out their fictive creations by giving them elaborately detailed bios (or invented personal histories and corresponding psychological profiles), then setting them in contexts that require them to interact in accordance with those individual and interrelated histories. Storyline art evolves as authors seek to visually represent tacit intricacies of relationships, motive, and action. Of course, as they work together, the storyliners may find that certain of their group have better skills in one creative area than another. One may be better at character or plot line development, another might be a skilled drawer of human or animal form, and another a better colorist. Thus, the young people quickly discover that specialization facilitates production of more skillfully crafted stories and artworks. Attention to excellence of literary and visual craftspersonship is encouraged by the desire to compete with others, individually and as groups, and be favorably judged by those in the worldwide arena of like-interest peers. This requires that all the collaborators must grow together in terms of their respective artistic abilities and rise to comparable levels of skill. For, as Josephina explained, “If the author is much better at words than the artist is at creating images, then the whole of the work will be incongruous, uneven—and the soul of the work will be lost,” (personal communication, December 20, 2001).

Attention to the critical opinion of one’s peers around the geographic world also promotes the globalization of literary and artistic tastes. Manga and animé are now the globally preferred literary and visual models for the storyline narratives and illustrations of adolescents (Chen, 2003; Manifold, 2003), even though these models present a complex, culturally specific iconography (Levi, 1996) that is largely unfamiliar to those of non-Japanese cultural heritage. Manga and animé stories often deal with dark themes of rejection or alienation, betrayal, rape, incest, suicide and other horrors of the most intense nature (Drazen, 2003; Levi, 1996). Frequently, imitative storylines also
address tragic themes. However, most storylines imitate shōjo (or shoujo), a female-targeted genre of manga/anime that focuses, not upon graphic description or portrayal of violence or mayhem, but upon the motivating factors and emotional consequences of such actions.

The tendency to focus upon aspects other than plot action is particularly evidenced in illustrations by storyline artists. For example, Anke, an artist contributor to Elfwood, a popular website of storyline and fan writings and art, explained her work by stating, “I chose scenes and characters that tend to be overlooked by other artists, scenes not charged with great action or emotion or drama” (Eissmann, 2003). Despite the darkness of the manga and anime-like storylines, these tragic tales are illustrated with romantic lyricism. Furthermore, the most tragic characters or plot situations are often among the sensitively and beautifully illustrated. When asked to provide some rationale for this, Josephina replied, “A lot of beautiful art may come out of grief. Beautiful images of suffering may be more touching than graphic images [of horror]” (personal communication. December 12, 2003).

**Storylining as a Female Preferred Role-Playing Behavior**

In my explorations of storylining, I am finding examples of both male and female young people who engage in collaborative and individual writing and art making activities. However, there does seem to be a higher incidence of female than male participation. Similarly, other researchers have found that more females than males engage in this particular type of socio-aesthetic play behavior (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Harris & Alexander, 1998). They insist that when boys do write and create storyline art they are less inclined to work collaboratively and are more likely to adapt and extend the stories of published authors than are girls. It has become a common notion that males prefer role-playing game play or fan-fiction writing (writings that merely extend the actions of commercially produced narratives) to original story and art making (Bleich, 1986; Clerc, 1996; Harris & Alexander, 1998). However, there are caveats to theories of distinctly divergent male/female preferences. Youth culture aesthetic tastes change quickly. For example, a very recent study reveals predict that, although the majority of those engaged in video role-playing games of the past have been males, female players have begun to surpass male players in certain kinds of role-playing game activities (Wright, 2003). Art forms that only a few decades ago were created to appeal specifically to female audiences are now found to be popular with male audiences as well (Thorn, 1995; Izawa, 2001; Levi, 1996). Furthermore, because youth who engage in the online activities are known to sometimes disguise their real genders (O’Brien, 1999; Turkle, 1997), the distribution of participants by gender may not be accurately assessed. There may be many more males (or fewer females) participating in either storylining or creative fan culture activities than would admit to doing so. This being said, the majority of subjects whom I interviewed and studied were—or identified themselves as—female. Thus, for purposes of this paper, particular attention will be paid to the storylining behaviors and expressions of adolescent girls and young women. Likewise, female preferred models and expressions of storylining art and literature and related feminine perceptions of self and society will be described and discussed.

**Images of Self-in-Other**

Early in my investigations, as an educator and a parent, I was both disturbed and intrigued by the stories and visual images the Trinity Group girls created on their alter-egos characters. According to Sennett (1992), “The more people interact … the more they become dependent on one another. People come to depend on others for a sense-of-self. One manipulates one’s appearance in the eyes of others so as to win their approval and thus feel good about oneself” (p. 117). Therefore, when I saw their drawings of female characters displayed erotically in
scanty costumes even though the story plots clearly presented females in empowered roles (as for example, environmental activists or champions of the oppressed), I was compelled to question the rationale for the author/artists choices. However, Josephina explained her character Jade by saying, “In reality, I was the slowest of the [Trinity] group to develop breasts, but my character was the most sensual, voluptuous, flirtly, even a little raunchy, and the most overtly sexual.” Josephina described how this gave her insight into how others might one day relate to her as she matured into a more overtly sexy female. She came to recognize that an open advertisement of sexuality—through erotic pose and unabashed posture—had the disadvantage of inviting unwanted advances; therefore, her invented alter ego is shown wearing a prominently displayed dagger as weapon of defense. Over time, the Jade character evolved to rely upon more intellectual, attitudinal, and martial art skills as strategies of negotiated sexual interactions or defense, thus mirroring Josephina’s growing confidence in her own maturing female body and gendered psyche.

Courtney, another Trinity Group member, developed the physical characteristics of womanhood quite early. Perhaps this helps us understand why she intentionally depicted her character, Nitric, as androgynously as possible, with cropped hair, dressed in a mannish jacket, shorts, and cuffed boots. Nitric displays no weapon of defense, possibly because her appearance dis-invites sexual advances. The androgyny of Courtney’s alter ego may reflect Courtney’s desire to remove sexuality as a factor to be addressed in various interactions. “In real life others react to you—and you adjust your behavior towards others—based on a perception of your sexuality. Nitric doesn’t have to deal with that” (Josephina, personal communication, September 14, 2003). As a consequence, Courtney, through her character Nitric, could focus on the freedom of unsexed action.

Imagic Genres: Shōjo, Bishōnen, and Yaoi

Although early drawings by members of the Trinity Group were influenced by reliance upon Barbie fashion templates as drawing aids, as two of the girls demonstrated more drawing talent and took over the role of group artists, their work began to reflect the growing global-youth-phenomena interest in manga and animé-style imagery. Early artworks seemed to imitate the wide-eyed features and cartoon-like forms of shōjo manga/animé like Sailor Moon and Fushigi Yugi. Shōjo is a Japanese term for women’s comics. These stories, written by and for women, present a generic counterpoint to shōnen, or male oriented comics, which involve considerable action (Thorn, 1995) and, like early American action comics, present strong male heroes with subordinate female heroines. The protagonists of shōjo are generally females in a wide range of unconventional roles. Although commercial shōjo is widely popular among American audiences, American girls often complain that the central characters of Japanese shōjo are portrayed as “whiny and ineffectual” and modify their own stories to correct this perceived weakness. “Our storylining differs from animé because we like our females to be stronger. Our females characters tend to be more
autonomous and mature than the female heroes of Japanese stories (Mason, personal communication, December 11, 2002).

Japanese shōjo and shōjo-like storylines emphasize emotion, character development, interactive personal relationships, and situational drama over action (Levi, 1996; Thorn, 1995). That is, they focus on narratives that "are often better conveyed visually than through words or actions" (Thorn, 1995). The visual illustrations presented in shōjo comics tend to be soft and dreamlike. Enormous eyes convey expressions of intense emotion. Other softened, prettified images and decorative motifs symbolize inner feelings, passages of time, or other abstract story elements (Izawa, 2001; Levi, 1996; Thorn, 1995). Thus, the style employs symbolic iconography (Stephens, 1998) rather than literal presentation. For example, flowers or other nature motifs, use of color and lighting, and stylized facial features and expressions all carry symbolic meaning (Levi, 1996). Shōjo-like stories and imagery also employ realistic fantastica (Manifold, in press) and emotional realism (Jenkins, 1992). That is, regardless of how impossible, fantasy-like, futuristic or other-worldly the images or situations, the work contains truths that provide a frame of reference for interpreting and modeling daily experiences and relationships (Jenkins, 1992; Thorn, 1997).

As they matured to early womanhood, the Trinity Group girls were attracted to imitate bishōnen imagery and a few of the group came to prefer yaoi stories and images, Commercially available Japanese shōjo often feature an unconventional variety of bishōnen, or androgynously beautiful bisexual or homosexual characters (Thorn, 1993; Manifold, in press). These inspired imitation by storyliners, including the Trinity Group authors and artists and others who were the subjects of this early study. Many also acquired a preference for yaoi, or erotic art and literature that features homosexual relationships between male characters. Yaoi stories, like shōjo comics, are almost exclusively created by and for women. Although the few male subjects who were participants of this study seemed alternately indifferent to or repulsed by this type of erotic storylining, nearly all the female subjects expressed either acceptance or overt preference for it. Indeed, one might wonder why stories about male homosexuality should so fascinate heterosexual teenaged girls and young women. Levi (1996), who has examined the popularity of this genre, suggests that girls and young women may be attracted to reading or writing yaoi-genre stories by virtue of narrative presentations of equality and communication in romance—two uncommon aspects of heterosexual relationships in most patriarchal societies. In same-sex romance "both characters may be portrayed as equally strong and equally vulnerable, equally dominant and equally submissive" without either quality being permanently linked to sexuality or gender (Jenkins, 1992, p. 194). Such stories allow readers to imagine loving relationships between equals (Lamb & Vieth, 1986). This explanation alone, however, would not account for the fact that yaoi or boy/boy love stories seem more popular among heterosexual girls than do yuri, or girl/girl love stories. In this regard, one member of the Trinity Group indicated that her appreciation for yaoi came from an ability to identify with the feelings of sexual attraction to males in ways she could not feel attraction for females.

I like to put myself in the position of the character of the story. Yuri deals with romantic/physical relationships that I have put aside in my mind as unappealing. I'm sexually attracted to males, not females. So I would not be able to imagine myself reacting to other women the way main characters in yuri do. (Mason M. personal communication, September 10, 2003).

Thorn (1993, 1997), in exploring the feminine fascination of yaoi, sees evidence that a female, who is not yet or not entirely comfortable
with her sexuality, may find same-sex relationships appealing because the stories expose her to a non-threatening male sexuality that allows her to “make sense of the mysterious male animal by casting him in terms she can understand” (Thorn, 1993). Yet, this may be too easy an explanation. Most of the female subjects of my investigation did not express notions of feeling particularly threatened or disconcerted by the ‘mysterious’ male, although they expressed some curiosity about what it might be like to enjoy male privileges of action. On the other hand, curiosity about male privileges did not translate into acting with the promiscuous abandon that has been an applauded male behavior in some patriarchal settings. For as one subject pointed out, “although mass media presentations (most of which are created by men) would have you believe otherwise, American women are strongly influenced by traditions of Judeo-Christian / Puritan morality to be and remain sexually pure or loyal to a long-term partner.” Instead, she suggested that, because feminine sexual desire generally resides in the brain — triggered by the senses (touch, taste, smell, sound and sight), the sensual beauty of yaoi might appeal to critical aspects of a female’s sexual arousal, while fantasizing yaoi storylines would “allow her to experiment with virtual-sex possibilities without being unfaithful to her partner, acquiring a bad reputation, or risking sexually transmitted diseases” (Mason M. personal communication, September 10, 2003).

Finally, many of the female subjects of this study gave curiosity about the forbidden in sexuality—rather than the mysterious male per se—as the motivating basis of interest in yaoi. In other words, yaoi may appeal simply because it allows exploration of cultural taboos. Homosexuality is a largely forbidden and hidden aspect of American culture. “So, it compels us to want to get into the minds of those who are forbidden or think forbidden thoughts,” (Aurora J., personal communication, July 28, 2003). It may be the mysterious, forbidden, aspects of homosexuality that holds irresistible appeal for adolescent girls and young women.

A visual-style related to the interest in yaoi narratives was observed in the prevalence of the bishōnen art. Depictions of effeminate, often bisexual, young men and warriors characterize the bishōnen or beautiful boy style. The original Japanese form was intended for female audiences, and bishōnen images were generally created by female artists rather than for or by gay males (Levi, 1996). As a visual style, bishōnen has come to be widely imitated by female storyline artists. Perhaps the lush, sensual, imagery may permit the female viewer to imagine herself in a different role and setting than that of the supportive adoring sidekick. She may “want to be an adoring goddess for a while” (p. 130). Yet, one nineteen-year old Canadian yaoi writer and bishōnen style artist explained it simply as a refined feminine sensibility.

I’m an aesthete at heart. Beauty absolutely enraptures me. I like beautiful men. I like beautiful women. In American society, beautiful men are something that’s not really... hmm... respected? Appreciated? And the Roman version of beauty is still too masculine for me. Then there’s the Asian style of beauty—slender men, androgynous, graceful and sleek. I liked that... that’s how I got roped into the bishōnen style of art. (Ruaki, personal communication, December 12, 2002)
Mentoring and Moving On

As the original members of the Trinity Group grew older, their interests in storyline changed. Some gave up the activity in favor of other interests. Of those whom I interviewed, one had become more interested in writing; two had pursued serious art interests and were enrolled in art schools and were preparing for careers in art related fields. A similar falling-out into specialized writing, art, and non-art interests was evident in the larger study population. Some attended art schools, colleges, or universities to prepare for art or writing related careers. A great many, however, did not seek or receive any formal instruction in their area of creative interest. Albeit, they continued to study, practice, and develop their writing or art making skills in peer mentoring settings. In fact, peer mentoring in the techniques of storyline style works was highly sought after and practiced by both those who received formal training and those who did not. Those who studied their craft in formal settings of art schools, colleges, or universities, often found that their preferred aesthetic styles of expression were neither appreciated nor encouraged by their academic instructors. Therefore, they turned to peer mentors for encouragement and instructional support of their work.

Both the formally and informally trained displayed their work online in community-interest-group websites, inviting others to comment upon, critique, and encourage or correct their efforts. The more skilled storyline writers and artists offered technical tutorials or gave instructional advice to the less skilled members of this vast online community. Lave and Wenger (1999/1993) have described this “circulation of knowledge among peers and near-peers” as having an exceedingly rapid positive effect upon learning” (p. 93). Indeed, many of those young women who claimed to have had only peer mentors as instructors exhibited works of such remarkable quality as to rival that of their academically trained peers.

Regardless of whether or not the women were exposed to academic education in writing/art, the preferred aesthetic models and expressive styles of these young women authors and artists appear to have gone through evolutionary change. Older adolescents and young women showed great interest in Euro-American art and literature. They expressed recognition that Euro-Western models, because they are culturally familiar (and therefore more easily understood and accessible to aesthetic manipulation than the iconographic symbology of Eastern traditions and philosophy evident in anime), hold greater possibility for metaphoric association.

Anime and manga show adolescents certain forms of being. But, when the fictives you’ve invented as pieces of your self or the characters you’ve adapted as part of your self no longer present possibilities of growth, you move on to seek more universal complex forms that are modeled after great works of art, like Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Lord of the Rings, or Harry Potter. These are more richly descriptive [for Westerners] and have more varied visual and plot forms. Their archetypic messages become more important (Josephina M., personal communication, June, 14, 2003).
Along with academically accepted authors like Shakespeare, C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, and J. K. Rowlings, older female storyliners are drawn to works by writers of fantasy, gothic horror, and science fiction. An early preference for Japanese visual styles and stories—and particularly the intrigue of metaphoric and iconographic symbolism, inclines storylining authors and artists to find equally symbol laden works within Western tradition. Older European traditions as expressed Celtic legends, Arthurian tales and stories of medieval chivalry and knighthood, European fairytales, Victorian era literature, and arcane tales of Judeo-Christian mysteries seemed to fascinate and inspire the authors. Storylining artists also looked to Euro-American canons of art styles for inspiration, of particular interest are highly realistic, romantic, and symbolic works. (See Figure 4) Favorite artists and art styles include the Pre-Raphaelites, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, Klimt, Mucha, Turner, the Walt Disney artists, Arthur Rackham, N. C. Wyeth and other Brandywine illustrators, and contemporary artists like Michael Whelan and Dave McKean.

Elements of the Japanese inspired manga and anime are not being discarded, however. Rather, they are being adapted to and incorporated in popular Western forms. Stories continue to be shōjo- and bishōnen-like, whether the young authors choose to write and illustrate original or fan-fiction-based works (i.e. works based on Western pop-culture characters). Yaoi reappears as slash, stories of boy/boy or girl/girl, based on characters from British and American television, movies, literature. Slash also is visually presented in more “realistic,” less anime-like styles (Courtney, personal communication, August 28, 2003). So, although these works exhibit manga and anime-like characteristics of symbolic iconography, emotional realism, and real fantastica, the symbols used, ways emotions are revealed, and the magical or fantastical powers assigned to the characters clearly reflect Euro-American styles and cultural traditions.

The Appeal of Role-Play: Caveats and Implications

Why should such highly culture-specific or theatrically artificial aesthetic styles as Japanese manga and anime or Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite, and Art deco styles appeal to Information-Age adolescents and young women? The subjects of this study pointed out that the narratives of these genres often deal with dark, brooding, psychologically complex, or symbolically secreted subject matter at a time in their lives when they are becoming personally and too-often painfully aware that life in school and on the streets is not as simplistic or Disneyesque as many adults would like to believe it to be. They consider adult attempts to shield them from ugly realities are both insults to their intelligence and futile shields from societal assaults. Awfulness of every variety and form assails them every day, whether conveyed through mass media or dumped literally on their doorsteps.

Therefore, preferences for symbolic iconographism, emotional realism, and real fantastica may represent attempts to both distance participants from too intense and in-your-face emotional experience.
Early in the 20th century German playwright Bertholt Brecht argued that viewers want and need some artificial distance from too-realistic experiences. Distance allows the viewer some space for critical contemplation, while lack of distance overpowers (Jenkins, 1992, p. 61), rendering the viewer weak and vulnerable. Although realistically depicted, the impossibly fantastic physical features, costuming, and settings employed by these young authors and artists permits them to distinguish and articulate between that which is not real - the outer physical -and that which is or might be real - the inner being, meaning, or emotion. At the same time, by projecting an undeveloped quality of self or a desired self-reality into a character of the story line, the participant can give distance to that corresponding aspect of self. Self-distance permits the creator to adapt, adjust, or craft certain physical or psychological attributes of the fictive character as if the creator was the character. It gives each member of the group an opportunity to practice a particular attribute or skill and to explore the effects and consequences of possessing such an attribute or skill in interaction with others. In so doing, the participants virtually experiment with possible solutions to the most intense, complex, or tragic problems of real life. The immediate goal may be to craft a coherent character, thereby stabilizing the fictive character so it might serve as an external point of reference for the actions and interactions of other characters within an invented story. Nevertheless, as a side effect, the adolescent may discover empowering qualities of self, conceive real solutions for social problems, and envision a more utopian global future.

The redefinition of male-female gendered roles and ways of being may suggest both a practical way of being in an Information-Age society and may presage an opening up to greater possibilities for personal feminine autonomy. Rather than clearly defined roles or a hierarchical social order, this role-play suggests a social environment of equalized yet differing powers, as in Rock-Paper-Scissors play, where empowerment roles differ and are equalized by being shifted from one to the other depending on factors of the moment. Adopting another persona also makes demands on one's understanding of self and suggests an opening up to acceptance of other ways-of-being. It encourages reflection upon the way ideas about self-image, gender, and place in the social environment shape our expectations (Turkle, 1997). This possibility of developing a self capable of seeing through other gender/cultural perspectives may—as a side effect—encourage the development of true empathy for the Other.

But we must not be too quick to applaud the socio-aesthetic phenomena of storylining as having altogether utopian consequences. There may be dangers in presenting the horrific as beautiful. Even when suffering might be more touchingly portrayed with lovely images than with graphic detail, might this beautiful mask also shield from facts of horror that should be dealt with in fact not fantasy? Injuries, hatreds, violence upon one other and the environment may call for enraged action rather than sentimental reaction. There are suggestions that the re-visioned social landscapes embrace some dangerous stereotypic ideals. Issues of racism, ethnic conflicts, or ageism are oddly missing from the narrative/illustrative storyline repertoire. Visual presentations of characters tend ubiquitously to exhibit the slender androgynous form, straight hair, and blend of delicate Asian and Caucasian features that are typical of manga and anime imagery (Manifold, 2003). This appears constant regardless of the actual race or culture affiliation of the young author/artists. In other words, while girls and young women of the Information Age may be envisioning less gender specific/restrictive roles for themselves in their narratives, the social landscapes and body images they project may be of sentimentalized, confining, or stereotypic ideals.

In the end, there is still much that we do not know about the nature, processes and effects of storylining behaviors or the resulting
products of those behaviors. We do not know with surety that the new stories and images being projected represent positively empowered possibilities of being, reinforce old stereotypes, or present new self-limitations. We do not know the full nature or extent of the situated teaching/learning procedures of storylining. We do not know whether these adolescent fantasies are being translated into the real social environments that the young authors/artists perceive as restrictive. It is unclear as to whether or not the adolescents and young women who engage in these activities are fully aware of the possibilities and ramifications of enacting their fantasized realities. Certainly, as outsiders to the phenomena, we are unenlightened in this regard.

Further study of the phenomena is important, for it might better enable educators to critique the projected visions of Information-Age girls and young women. Also, an examination of the informal way that storylining participants instruct, mentor, and critique one another's work can provide curricular models for educators. This knowledge would both inform us regarding a little known aspect of female youth culture and permit educators to plan and develop effective classroom curricula and instructional strategies for the education of positively empowered adolescent females of Information-Age societies.

Notes

1 The Information-Age began in the United States in 1979 with the sale of the first personal home computers to the general public. It spread to other post-industrialized countries as computers became available to the middle-classed public (Stephens, 1998).

2 The group, at its largest, consisted of eight members.

3 Animal forms adopted as personas for storyline play are referred to as furries.

4 See http://elfwood.lysator.liu.se/elfwood.html

5 Although one might argue that Nitric's costumed appearance would not dis-invite lesbian approaches, lesbianism was neither addressed nor overtly suggested in any of the Trinity storylines featuring the Nitric character.

6 The Sailor Moon series, by manga artist Naoko Takeuchi, was introduced to Japanese audiences in 1995. According to Drazen (2003), "The shows been a hit in Japan, in the U.S. and Canada, in Poland, in the Philippines, in Brazil, and especially on the Internet" (p. 11).

7 The Fushigi Yugi series was created by Yu Watase.

8 Among those interviewed for this study, only one male and two females identified themselves as preferring same-sex or bi-sexual relationships. All others indicated heterosexual preferences. While it is possible that due to the social prohibitions against homosexuality other interviewed subjects might have been hesitant to admit privately entertained homosexual tendencies, without any reported or observable evidence to the contrary, I am bound to accept statements claiming heterosexuality as genuine.


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This is the second part to a complementary essay that appeared in JSTAE (jagodzinski 2003). It was also written in 1998 and is being revisited some six years latter given that the cultural landscape in art education is slowly turning its sights towards visual cultural studies, a position JSTAE has been exploring for almost a quarter of a century if we take into account our earlier “Bulletin” publication, which began in 1980. The theme of silence arises, for me, a question of what is a radical politics at the turn of the century? It seems that the only game in town is that of neo-liberalism, while the question of ‘democratic populism’ as a form of liberal pluralism continues to be debated within cultural studies. This essay critiques the question of ‘pleasurable resistance’ as it manifests itself in popular cultural forms as examined mostly by John Fiske, an exemplary left-leaning critic. It may seem anachronistic to analyze the Newlywed Game and Madonna, given that both ‘forms’ are in their retirement years. Her clone, Britney Spears, is slowly supplanting Madonna, while The Newlywed Game has been replaced by ‘reality television,’ which ironically subverts it. We now have the Bachlorette and even a television series where the sanctity of marriage has to be subverted in order to win a million dollars: My Big Fat
Jagodzinski Jan

Questioning Fantasies of Popular ‘Resistance:’ Democratic Populism and Radical Politics in Visual Cultural Studies

This is the second part to a complementary essay that appeared in JSTAE (jagodzinski 2003). It was also written in 1998 and is being revisited some six years latter given that the cultural landscape in art education is slowly turning its sights towards visual cultural studies, a position JSTAE has been exploring for almost a quarter of a century if we take into account our earlier “Bulletin” publication, which began in 1980. The theme of silence arises, for me, a question of what is a radical politics at the turn of the century? It seems that the only game in town is that of neo-liberalism, while the question of ‘democratic populism’ as a form of liberal pluralism continues to be debated within cultural studies. This essay critiques the question of ‘pleasurable resistance’ as it manifests itself in popular cultural forms as examined mostly by John Fiske, an exemplary left-leaning critic. It may seem anachronistic to analyze the Newlywed Game and Madonna, given that both ‘forms’ are in their retirement years. Her clone, Britney Spears, is slowly supplanting Madonna, while The Newlywed Game has been replaced by ‘reality television,’ which ironically subverts it. We now have the Bachlorette and even a television series where the sanctity of marriage has to be subverted in order to win a million dollars: My Big Fat...
Obnoxious Fiancé (Fox). However, the distance traveled from these older genres is not so great. The question of ‘pleasurable resistance’ remains front and center. Irony, as has been often remarked, remains as a postmodern strategy to undermine dominant hegemony. This essay also questions star and fandom resistance, and consumerist resistance. It ends with a call for a structural consideration of political economy and material analysis in popular culture by left-leaning critics. For this is where the silence lies.

Romanticized Resistances

There has been a tendency in cultural studies (and visual cultural studies as well), over the years, to over-dramatize the political effectiveness of ‘semitic resistance’ as opposed to socio-political resistance (e.g., Fiske, 1989a: 72). While fantasy is a private and intimate experience, which can be part of a strategy of resistance, it is also the very seat of seduction where hegemony reinstates itself (Miller, 1990). The excess of meaning which heteroglossic texts—like television—allow for resistant readings seem infinitesimal when compared to the machinery that enables dominant patriarchal and capitalist fantasies to be reproduced. Many fictive narratives where gay and lesbian or peoples of color are the protagonists remain under-represented or absent. If they are included, like The Gay Eye for the Straight Guy, it is done in an ironic, hyperbolized way, to make it more palpable so as not to offend anyone. As Dana Cloud (1992) pointed out, it requires a great deal of sustained energy to produce a counter-text. The economy involved in taking such a position eventually becomes untenable. It is far easier to enjoy the pleasures of the text, to let its lure swarm over you. Otherwise, why watch the series in the first place? In over-emphasizing resistance at the micropolitical level without differentiating between which practices are ‘more’ likely to be radically progressive than others with regards to principles of democracy (equality, liberty, justice), particularly when it comes to structural changes for the betterment of human(e)kind, leads to a conservatism that treats virtually all practices that challenge the hegemony of the power bloc as celebratory. There is a flattening out of the distinctions between various counter-hegemonic activities and an underestimation of the seductive persuasions of pleasurable resistance as a form of containment, the way capitalist hegemony works in the first place. When Barthes’ distinction is maintained between jouissance and plaisir (see Fiske, 1987: 227-230,) the circumstances which surround the production of one or the other forms of pleasure cannot be ethically and politically judged unless some accountability for the macro structures that inform that localized space are analyzed and set against other competing discourses of value. In Laclau and Mouffe’s remindful words,

Although we can confirm, with Foucault, that wherever there is power there is resistance, it must also be recognized that the forms of resistance may be extremely varied. Only in certain cases do these forms of resistance take on a political character and become struggles directed towards putting an end to relations of subordination as such. ... What we are referring to is the type of action whose objective is the transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination.

(Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:152-153)

Laclau and Mouffe distinguish and contrast relations of ‘subordination’ from relations of ‘oppression.’ The former is defined when an agent is subjected to the decisions of another, as in a family situation where the wife is subjected with respect to her husband, or an employee to an employer, while the later is characterized by those relationships that have become transformed into sites/sites/sights of antagonism. Subordinated relations can become ‘relations of
domination,' which are different from 'oppressive' relationships only in the sense that they are judged as being illegitimate by a 'social agent external to them.' What they mean by this is that a democratic discourse has to emerge which articulates and 'interrupts' the different forms of resistance to subordination in such a way that their inequality is made obvious through a social imaginary. For example, the subversive power of a democratic discourse symbolized by the Declaration of the Rights of Man constituted a historical 'nodal point' around which a new matrix of the social imaginary became fixed, providing a new 'measure' for democratic social relationships. However, there is no teleological direction chartered for the course of this social democratic imaginary to take shape; nor is there any guarantee that forms of resistance to new forms of subordination will necessarily be articulated into a democratic discourse. The emergence of the New Right has, in many cases, successfully harnessed the new social antagonisms under the need for greater autonomy and individuality with less state interference in social welfare programs. Balibar (1991) has brilliantly argued that the new forms of neo-racism, or 'civilized racism,' rely on the need for a greater autonomy based on an argument that distance must be maintained between ethnicities and races. It is 'natural,' argue the ideologues of the Right, for each ethnic and racial group to maintain its own traditional culture. Without such cultural isolation and self-containment, 'peaceful co-existence' would not be possible. In this way inequalities are preserved. The rising tide of neo-Nazi skinhead cultures with their concomitant display of nationalist and fascistic music, protest marches, and speeches as resistant anti-democratic forms of subordination, confirm, more than ever, the urgent need to discriminate amongst various forms of resistance as to their commitment to keeping the horizon of democracy open.

Not all resistances are antagonistic. Resistances can be internal and accommodating to society, but antagonisms may be thought as "external to society, or rather, they constitute the limits to society, the latter's impossibility of fully constituting itself" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:125). Antagonisms are 'floating signifiers,' polysemic in character, which can link themselves structurally to other struggles. They have, therefore, a constructed or constitutive character that enables the emergence of a counter-hegemonic bloc. In contrast, most of the applauded popular resistances are not antagonistic so much as contradictory in their relationship to patriarchal capitalism. They do not so much as present the limit of society as aid in its organic suturing. "We all participate in a number of mutually contradictory belief systems," write Laclau and Mouffe (1985:124), "and yet no antagonism emerges from these contradictions."

A particularly good example of how this contradictory form of resistance is held in esteem in cultural studies I turn to the theoretical position held by John Fiske. Fiske (1989c: 58-65) provides a sustained discussion over the various interpretations of a segment drawn from the television series, The Newlywed Game, as an example of a practical working out of his theory of popular culture. (But, it equally applies to its present-day spin-offs, such as Bachlorette). It must be kept in mind that Fiske has a very specific definition of what popular culture is. First, it is always a practice produced through text-reader interaction, and second, it is always a reactive practice to the forces of domination. Dominance has to be understood as the central core of values that reproduce the orderly society and maintain the system from any structural change towards democratic betterment. In this game against the power bloc, Fiske can claim that popular cultural practices are progressive and pleasurable in the tactical ways they create spaces of disruption in order to undermine the dominant power whose strategy is to keep them compliant. In brief, popular culture is a theory for the under-dog: it comes in all varieties and sizes. But, before examining The Newlywed Game, Fiske's understanding of power, which he borrows from Foucault, needs to be clarified.
It should now be noted that ‘popular culture’ seems to be a ‘blink’ phenomenon—one moment its on, the next moment its off—for “readings that fail to activate its [a text’s] contradictions—that is, readings that consent to its hegemonic strategy—these are not part of popular culture” (Fiske, 1989c: 44, my emphasis). Both audience and the text are set in fluid motion interacting and touching at moments of ‘relevance’ characterized by contradiction if such readings are to be given the status ‘popular.’ In this regard, Fiske follows Foucault’s understanding of power as being contingent, diffuse, and aleatory phenomenon. The power of the popular emerges only with the evidence of knowledgeability. But there is a problem here. How does one know exactly what the interests of the power-bloc are since the construed text is not the materiality, nor the structure, but the act of reading and its pleasurable and tactful use? Somewhere a text-centric socio-historical analysis is already required to identify what is dominant, otherwise a critique by resistance theorists as to the ‘preferred’ textual reading would not be possible. There seems to be a gap in acknowledging the significance of the power/knowledge distribution already in circulation through the various discourses that are available to the participants. Such an explanatory understanding presupposes a Marxist historical materialist critique, which articulates the unequal distribution of power between the haves and have-nots.

This gap is particularly glaring in Fiske’s (1993) ‘homeless’ example. A group of ‘homeless’ men watching *Die Hard* in a hospice stop the cassette once Bruce Willis (the protagonist) begins to side with the police. The discursive knowledge that informed the pleasure of their resistance was a rather simple and gratuitous one: always siding with the underdog regardless of the narrative. Their next cassette was *Robocop.* This is a long way from a discursive analysis that would work out Japanese interests in the U.S. (Nakatomi Corporation), link this to transnational capitalism, explore the racist overtones of the narrative, and show why individualism and heroic action is valorized in capitalist society (see Elsaesser and Buckland, 2002:26-79). Would such knowledge make a difference to their social lot in life? The spectacular violence and inherent power struggles in *Die Hard,* as Fiske (1993:129) admits, provides these men with a way to vent their resentment at the social system (i.e., display cynical reason). Wouldn’t it be more accurate to say that the consumption of ‘popular culture,’ like *Die Hard,* are specifically construed texts which can absorb a variety of contradictory readings and still assert hegemony? Doesn’t its spectacular effects of violence as represented by Bruce Willis (or *Robocop*) allow for a cathartic release of frustration that these homeless men find themselves in? Don’t these masculinist fantasies help appease their situation rather than change it? The strength of these texts lies in their polysemic capabilities for such a ‘purchase’ by capitalist modes of production. Hasn’t hegemony already won the day (to some degree) as soon as one plunks down eight dollars to see a Hollywood film, rent a videocassette, or switch on a television set? ... A too pessimistic a view perhaps?

Such a definition of ‘popular culture’ is the exact inverse of Fiske’s definition. Whereas Fiske defines popular culture negatively—as a reaction against dominance—here it becomes defined positively: in its ability to convince and persuade, thereby absorb differences for hegemonic ends. Fiske often recognizes this contradiction in his own theory (1989b: 183; 1991a: 115) but for the sake of ‘semiotic democracy’ Fiske is willing to take the risk of ‘oversimplifying the dominant.’ We arrive at Michel de Certeau’s (1984) dichotomization of tact vs. strategy where such a binary structure maintains the hegemonic system through internal self-definition. The difficulty here is that resistance remains parasitic—producing no counter-hegemonic force, no transfer in ‘real’ power or capital (McGuigan, 1992: 70-75).
Complicity and Contradiction of The Newlywed Game

Let me now continue with Fiske's example that fleshes out the difficulties of the distribution of power/knowledge. In his review of the responses to a clip from The Newlywed Game, Fiske points out that the pleasure he personally found was complicated because of the intertwining of three different discourses: an academic one—his interest in popular culture; another was a discursive set which brought to bear aspects of his class/gender/age/race, and finally a populist discourse which both contradicted and complemented the other two. Fiske admits to having 'vulgar tastes and democratic inclinations' which make him addressable by his class and its tastes that he 'objectively' belongs to. (But which class is that, one must ask, given that endowed professors can often earn executive wages?) Fiske's aside implies that such a class of people collect high art, go to ballets, the theater, eat out at fine restaurants, and wear spiffy clothes when they lecture. He has a fashionable disdain for 'bourgeois high art' which maintains an aesthetics of objectivity and distance. Such an exaggeration of Bourdieu's (1984) theory of class distinction, as interpreted and supported by Fiske, was severally criticized by a number of audience members who listened to a similar presentation of his position at the 'Cultural Studies Now and in the Future' conference held at the University of Illinois in 1990 (Fiske, 1990). Such disruption, what a number of critics have referred to as a turn towards a 'jocular' libidinal economy (Ebert, 1996; Zavarzadeh, Ebert, and Morton, 1995), is almost always confined to the individual and seldom moves into socio-historical critique.

A staunch democrat, a brilliant critic, and an exemplary teacher, as a personality Fiske appears to exemplify the contradictory conflations of the theory he defends. The institution of the university, for instance, allows such mavericks amongst its conservative midst. It even expects such critics given the contestations of discursive knowledge formations fought for in the name of democracy and the freedom of speech. But, I'm not so sure how far Fiske has escaped his class assigned position despite the pleasures he finds in the more 'vulgar' forms of culture (1989c:179). It is obvious, for example, that he has a great deal of mobility, and it is questionable whether his academic interests in these 'strong vulgar tastes' make him 'typical of the people in general' (ibid.). He underplays his rhetorical strengths and his insights achieved from the study of popular culture that enable him to maintain his 'cynical edge.' The academic critic seems to be caught by what Cornel West (1990) once characterized as an oxymoronic position of involved 'co-opted progressivism.' This charge is borne out in Fiske's interpretation of the various responses to the Newlywed Game.

Regarding student response to the Newlywed Game, Fiske observes that his male students read the clip as exposing the limitations of patriarchy while for some feminists the clip showed how sexual desire is enshrined by patriarchy. Both were given the approval as good examples of resistant readings. However, it was the women students—those mysterious creatures who were rhetorically categorized as being 'ordinary women' or 'housewives' and not feminists—who found the clip pleasurable. Their pleasure came from the way they coped with the patriarchy of male dominance as they related it to the clip. Not knowing the structural level of the system, these women students sided with the losers in the game since they were the ones who best contradicted dominant patriarchal ideology, displayed gender conflict, got the most laughs, and were chided by the host. As the saying goes: 'sometimes when you win, you lose, and when you lose you win.' The vulnerability of male power was revealed through the tactics of their wives' resistance. The embarrassment of the husbands was found pleasurable.
For this reason, Fiske claims this to be a progressive example of resistance since these women could relate to the micropolitics of gender as exchanges of power. Fan response to the *Newlywed Game* confirmed these preliminary findings. Fiske then points out something startling which, in my mind at least, undermines his entire argument, but vivifies the power/knowledge structures in circulation:

I do not wish to criticize the feminists’ response to this tiny segment of popular culture. Their response was perfectly valid, but so too was the response of nonfeminist women. But the gap between the two illustrates the difference between the radical and the progressive, between strategic and tactical resistances, between structural and practical perspectives. In fact, *The Newlywed Game* was not part of the popular culture of feminists. They found no pleasure in the text (except, possibly, that of confirming their knowledge of the horror of patriarchy in the raw), they did not choose to watch the show as part of their everyday lives, and so they made no productive use of the resources it offered. For them the text was neither producerly nor popular.

(Fiske, 1989c:62)

Unless I am mistaken, this passage identifies the experience of popular culture (as Fiske defines it) as a ‘gut level’ unarticulated Marxism. ‘Nonfeminist’ student anxieties of patriarchy were relieved through the *cathartic* release of laughter. For fans, i.e., married women watching the game at home, it was a release from the contradictions of marriage. The social relationship of subordination would remain unchanged. If popular culture is such a source of resistant pleasure, then it seems to confirm its usefulness as a safety valve to insure the reproduction of patriarchy. In contrast the feminist response was one of refusal, and I would add—*more* valid. Their behavior was *antagonistic*, calling on the limit of this genre. There is a vast difference between a ‘gut level’ Marxism and an articulation of what’s going on at the level of structure. Feminist women in Fiske’s class had worked through their desire to embrace such marital arrangements. They had been ‘conscientized’ (cf. Paulo Freire, 1970) to the workings of its ideology. Fiske says as much in the quoted passage. They see such behavior not in isolated familiar terms, but as an institutionalized behavior to insure male dominance. They are not ‘dupes and dopes’ of this particular institution, and are able to turn the television set off. Although they found no pleasure in *The Newlywed Game*, they *did* produce a private text with a subject position that defined them as the disenfranchised Other. For them, to take other available subject positions would be limiting and complicit. There was nothing for them to laugh at. In contrast, it strikes me that these ‘nonfeminist’ women experienced masochistic pleasure without being fully aware as to why. Caught by the system, like the Fiske’s ‘homeless’ men, the best they could do was push it back a little. Calling such actions ‘popular culture’ seems ironic and rather disheartening. Refusal, not pleasure or evasion in this case should become ‘popular.’ A conscientized husband would refuse to be put in such uncompromising position as a participant on the show. The potential of ‘gut’ level Marxism (or to use Zavarzadeh’s (1992) term—‘ludic pleasure’) would need to be conscientized to a structural level before anything more ‘radical’ occurred, like that of ‘refusal.’ The range of responses to the *Newlywed Game* points out the uneven distribution of power/knowledge relationships. While Fiske could enjoy the pleasures of this game show, he did so from a much more sophisticated subject position than any of his students. If he hadn’t, it would have been impossible for him to present such a lucid explanation of the existent discourses.
Star and Fandom Resistance:
Blue-Sky Utopias & Dark-night Dystopias

On a different level, Sci-Fi fandom's power of resistance is justified by providing readers "with an image of a better world, an alternative future, an ideal against which to measure contemporary life but also a refuge from drudgery and constraint" (Jenkins, 1992: 281). Penley (1992) has similarly defended the utopian impuise of SF fanzines of Star Trek which introduce gay relationships between Spock and Captain Kirk as a way of projecting masculinities that cannot possibly exist 'on earth.' Is this call to utopia yet another form of romanticized resistance? At first glance, the answer seems to be, no. Laclau and Mouffe (1985), for example, write that "without 'utopia', without the possibility of negating an order beyond the point that we are able to threaten it, there is no possibility at all of the constitution of a radical imaginary—whether democratic or any other type" (190). There is, however, an earlier cautionary warning when they say "not to fall into the different forms of utopianism which seek to ignore the variety of spaces which constitute those structural limits" (ibid.), 'Structural limits' refers to the need to recognize the constraints placed on the various sectors of society, i.e., the economy and state apparatuses which prevent the emergence of a pluralities of strategies for the construction of a new order. Put in the vernacular, this means avoiding utopias which "bite off more than can be chewed;" blue-sky utopias which avoid the difficult questions that a critique of political economy brings. As Lyon (1994) argues, most of the utopian literature, which contends that information technologies will free up more freedom deny the increasing concentration of corporate, state and military control over the means of generating information. The utopian benefits of virtual reality of cyberspace (e.g., Rhinegold, 1991), in particular, become "the 'symptom' that organizes jouissance of the capitalist mind-set" (Brande, 1996:85). The other side of the coin is the 'new bad future' (Glass, 1990) of dark-night dystopias. The cyberpunk genre presents us with cathartic fantasies of 'space cowboys' (Ross, 1991) who will eventually win the day. The 'symptom' that organizes jouissance here is a cathartic release from technophobic anxieties—the fin de siècle jitters of an apocalypse.

Both utopian and dystopian dimensions of SF are drawn from the current backdrop of society. As such they embody both the anxieties and hopes of the age. The early Star Trek series, for example, drew its utopian projections from the backdrop of the John F. Kennedy era of liberalization (Penley, 1992). Star Trek: The New Generation and Deep Space 9 must deal with the changed world of intercultural exchange, single families, and the impact of feminism. There is, I think, an earlier lesson to be learnt from Jameson's (1981) examination of this utopian impulse, which is helpful when approaching this question. He charges late capitalism as constructing the subject as a closed monad, governed by the laws of 'psychology. "With the 'full-blown appearance of [a] filmic point of view,..., the Utopian overtones and intensities of desire are ever more faintly registered by the text; and the Utopian impulse itself, now reified, is driven back inside the monad, where it assumes the status of some merely psychological experience, private feeling, or relativized value" (160). The Utopian impulse needs to be recognized, but the question as to how is complicated.

In his concluding chapter, Jameson (1981) quotes Walter Benjamin's great dictum: "there is no document of civilization which is not at one and the same time a document of barbarism" (286). He concludes that what is effectively ideological is also, at the same time, necessarily Utopian. For hegemony to maintain itself, it "must necessarily involve a complex strategy of rhetorical persuasion in which substantial incentives are offered for ideological adherence. We will say that such incentives, as well as the impulses to be managed by the mass cultural text, are necessarily Utopian in nature" (ibid.). Ernst Bloch is given credit for having uncovered the Utopian impulses at work in the most degraded of all mass cultural texts—advertising slogans. Here
can be found the “visions of external life, of the transfigured body, of preternatural sexual gratification,” from the “crudest forms of manipulation on the oldest Utopian longings of humankind” (ibid.). Jameson is relentless in pursuing this argument. Adorno-Horkheimer’s

Dialectic of Enlightenment is further singled out as demonstrating that “one of the ugliest of all human passions, anti-Semitism, is shown to be profoundly Utopian in character, as a form of cultural envy which is at the same time a repressed recognition of the Utopian impulse” (288).

More to the point: “all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes—is in its very nature Utopian” (289). This takes Jameson to his conclusion that all class-consciousness of whatever type is Utopian insofar as it expresses the unity of a collectivity; “yet it must be added that this proposition is an allegorical one. The achieved collectivity or organic group of whatever kind—oppressors fully as much as oppressed—is Utopian not in itself, but only insofar as all such collectivities are themselves figured for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopia or classless society” (291).

Trekies and the phenomenon of fandom in general do not escape Jameson’s injunctions concerning ideology and utopia. America’s prosperity, its utopic ‘dream,’ is collectively both disputed and affirmed in every episode of Star Trek. Elements of both good and evil must necessarily co-exist together if this ‘dream’ is to be reconfirmed and reinscribed in the social imaginary. A ‘negative hermeneutic’ exposes the evil (the narrow sense of false consciousness), while a ‘positive hermeneutic’ exposes the Utopian good, but neither one is sufficient in and of itself. “[A] Marxist negative hermeneutic, a Marxist practice of ideological analysis proper, must in the practical work of reading and interpretation be exercised simultaneously with a Marxist positive hermeneutic, or a decipherment of the Utopian impulses of these same

still ideological texts” (Jameson, 1981:296). For Jameson, any cultural text is a ‘mixed bag,’ both ‘blindness and insight’ to use the title of a well-known book, which can be skillfully and effectively put to use for rhetorical persuasion by the Left or the Right. Richard Dyer (1981/1977) usefully explored this manipulation of utopian desire by commercial forms of entertainment some two decades ago. Sketching five categories of ‘Utopian sensibility’ parodied in popular entertainment: abundance, energy, transparency, intensity and community, he demonstrated how each of them was structured in opposition to actual living conditions: scarcity, exhaustion, manipulation, dreariness and fragmentation (cf. McGuigan, 1992:247).

If we return to Jenkins, now reading him with Jameson in mind, it can be seen that the notion of resistance remains a matter of decisive political interpretation. So while Jenkins (1992:283) quotes Lawrence Grossberg and Ien Ang, reminding his readers that “[consumer] relations to particular practices and texts are complex and contradictory” [Grossberg], and that ‘reality is always more complicated and diversified than theories can represent’ [Ang], the question of political choice cannot be avoided. Consumer responses are never made in total freedom and are not always critical because they are resistant, and while reality is always more complicated than is thought, we cannot escape from its reductive theorizations. Jenkins, seems to recognize this himself. His statement below supports Jameson’s view.

[F]andom also provides a space within which fans may articulate their specific concerns about sexuality, gender, racism, colonialism, militarism, and forced conformity. ... Fandom contains both negative and positive forms of empowerment. ... In making this claim, I am not asserting that fandom necessarily represents a progressive force or that solutions fans propose are ideologically consistent and coherent. A poached culture, a nomadic culture, is
also a patchwork culture, an *impure culture*, where much that is taken in remains semidigested and ill considered.

(Jenkins, 1992: 283, emphasis added).

Saying this, however, does not get Jenkins off the hook. He still must commit an act of interpretation and throw his ‘weight’ into a discourse with a set agenda—not so easily done when both Ideology and Utopia swim around in the same pond. As McGuigan (1992:248-49) points out, there are ‘critical Utopias’ and ‘achieved Utopias.’ Examples of the former, like Mike David’s analysis of Los Angeles in his *City of Quartz* (1990) are difficult to find, whereas the claims for the latter are in abundance under the guise of a liberal pluralism (e.g., Francis Fukuyama, 1989 and Richard Rorty, 1989).

The difficulty of such cultural assessment remains apparent even when it becomes possible to examine less contemporary events. Fiske (1993: 101-102) describes the ‘hysterical’ fandom that came with rock-’n’-roll and ‘Beatlemania,’ which peaked in 1963. He makes a convincing argument that such youth rebellion, as ‘juvenile delinquency,’ was propaedeutic to the rise of liberalist feminism in the mid-60s. It’s oppositional expression came as a result of parental prohibitions, suburban order, and strict discipline. Elvis’ gyrating and thrusting body is linked with Black culture, capitalizing on the emerging Black music rhythms and vitality. Yet, despite such rebellion, it cannot be denied that such ‘resistance’ was strictly divided along sex-gender lines. The rock-’n’-roll performers, virtually all male, represented the freedom and liberation from familial responsibility; girls on the other hand were their adoring fans who lived out this desire only in fantasy. As for Elvis, as Fiske freely admits, he was a white impersonation of Black, “making money out of Black talent” (1993:106). It was not only Elvis that made money from such ‘resistant rebellion,’ the entire music industry began its reign of profit that continues today. Perhaps the main difference today has been the replacement of Elvis, as the white modernist icon, with the postmodernist ‘hybridic figure’ of ‘bad’ Michael Jackson: scratching his crotch, supported and abetted by Pepsi Cola transnational to support ‘the children of the world,’ while he himself has been implicated in pedophilic behaviors; neither Black nor White, neither ‘natural’ nor entirely ‘artificial,’ but certainly rich.

This ‘impure culture’ is very difficult to figure out. As informative as many ethnographic studies are in showing different responses to, say *Dallas* or Cagnie & Lacey (Ang, 1990; Press, 1990; Clark, 1990), by various class strata, the cultural landscape is more like of a kaleidoscope, constantly changing, impossible to ‘freeze frame’ long enough to claim some sort of ‘critical mass’ to articulate a nodal point of fixed resistance. In terms of a more up-dated metaphor, the cultural situation is more like an HIV virus that is able to constantly change itself to anything the immune system (cultural critics) can throw at it. To solve this theoretical difficulty Fiske has turned to a cultural analysis of ‘stars’ where the situation seems stabilized long enough to take a reading before the star ‘morphs’ into a new image to assure novelty and insure profit dollars.3

**Asking the ‘Real’ Madonna to ‘Please Stand Up’**

In his discussion as to how the field of cultural studies might be advanced, Fiske argues that the methodological strategies of ethnography (the meanings fans actually attribute to Madonna), and semiotic structuralist textual analysis (a close reading of the signifieds in Madonna’s text as they are played out in the ideology of the culture) be combined. Doing so “recognizes that the distribution of power in society is paralleled by the distribution of meanings in texts, and the struggles for social power are paralleled by semiotic struggles for meanings. Every text and every reading has a social and therefore political dimension ...” (1989b:97.) Fiske is unquestionably aware of the politics of interpretation. He, of course, recognizes that being part
of a pluralistic capitalist society can lead to the conservatism of Daniel Bell’s (1973) “end of ideology” thesis, or worse yet, Fukuyama’s (1989) “end of history” thesis. However the more difficult question is how does one activate his sound proposal? How can one possibly begin to judge the responses to any text without a stand on the capitalist patriarchal order in the first place? Doesn’t this again lead to charges of cultural elitism and ‘false consciousness’? How are we to differentiate ‘progressive’ resistant practices from more reactionary ones without such a stance? As he writes at the end of his second book on the politics of popular culture:

On the one hand, it can be argued that progressive practices are panaceas allowed by the system to keep the subordinate content within it. By allowing the system to be flexible and to contain points of opposition within it, such progressive practices actually strengthen that to which they are opposed, and thus delay the radical change that is the only one that can bring about a genuine improvement in social conditions.

(Fiske, 1989c:192.)

But this is wrong-headed, according to Fiske, for it ends up in a Marxist orthodoxy that leads to a “pessimistic reductionism that sees all signs of popular progress or pleasures as instances of incorporation, and therefore conceives of power as totalitarian and resistible only by direct radical and revolutionary action” (ibid.). No, it doesn’t! Surely, any radical popular cultural research must differentiate amongst various ‘resistant’ readings in their complicity for or against social oppression? The shape of Madonna’s ‘image’ exists within the bounds of capitalist and patriarchal socio-economic relations, doesn’t it? Surely, this level of macro structure defines the parameters of her image, although Madonna can ‘play’ with its borders. Isn’t her polarization by fans as virgin/ whore the very consciousness of femininity which patriarchy supports? Doesn’t she exploit this very structure that precedes her? What about the question of Madonna’s own pleasure? Fiske seems to have direct insight into her head when he writes: “Her use of religious iconography is neither religious nor sacrilegious. She intends to free it from this ideological opposition and to enjoy it, use it, for the meanings and pleasure that it has for her, not for those of the dominant ideology and its simplistic binary thinking. ... The crucifix is neither religious, nor sacrilegious, but beautiful ... ’ (1989b: 103, emphasis added). Are we supposed to accept this aesthetic formalism, and believe that the crucifix is admired for its shape alone? That aesthetics escapes ethics?

Another way to theorize Madonna’s use of the cross and other religious paraphernalia is to name them as forms of neo-kitsch, or ‘second-degree kitsch’ as Olalquiaga (1992: 42-45) sees it. In contrast to first-degree kitsch, where representation is based on an indexical referent, the hierarchical distinction between reality and representation is still maintained (e.g., as a symbolic religious icon where the relationship between object and user is one of genuine belief), second-hand kitsch “collapses this difference by making the object’s representation into the only possible referent” (45). Representation itself becomes the ‘real, ‘an empty icon devoid of sacredness. As an acquired taste for tackiness and defamiliarization, should such a brazen aesthetic, “a perspective wherein appreciation of the ‘ugly’ conveys to the spectator an aura of refined decadence, an ironic enjoyment from a position of enlightened superiority,” (Fiske,1989c:192) be praised as a form of resistance? After reviewing other objects in this “holy kitchen,” Olalquiaga concludes that this camp sensibility is little more than “a safe release into sentimentality.” The question remains, how intentionally and self-consciously resistant is Madonna’s use of this ‘holy kitchen’ as she partakes in the passing over of kitsch to mass culture? (Her latest ‘sacred’ excursion in 2002, with her husband-
director Guy Ritchie, is to promote “holy water” as part of a curative Kabala ritual! Perhaps she is merely one of the many aficionados of neo-kitsch, participating in the then current fad for religious objects found in New York’s Little Rickie, playing with signs made possible in the consumerist world of simulacrum; their worth, as Fiske says, based on the formal and technical aspects of their appearance, and part of the general ‘aesthetization of everyday life’? (Featherstone, 1991).

A lot has been made of the Left’s painting the ‘masses’ as ‘cultural dopes and dupes’ of the system, as mere ‘cultural subjects’ rather than ‘cultural agents’ who actively make meanings. False consciousness has lost its currency. The concept has been deconstructed for its inherent binarism, suggesting that there is no ‘true’ picture to be uncovered. The Left is said to overlook the creation of active micro-political meaning, as in Madonna’s case, within the “gaps and spaces in her image that escape ideological control” (Fiske, 1989b: 97) so that her image may be empowered, “not as a model meaning for young girls in patriarchy, but a site of semiotic struggle between the forces of patriarchal control and feminist resistance, of capitalism and the subordinate, of the adult and the young” (ibid., emphasis added). But how that ‘iconic’ site is to be interpreted falls right back on the shoulders of the cultural critic. Daniel Harris (1992:30-31) makes this point in his discussion over the rise of Madonna studies by academics of popular culture who accredit her with the kind of over-romanticized resistance being argued for here. Aside from Camilla Paglia’s (1992) valorization of Madonna as the kind of woman who pushes back male aggression through the unleashing of ‘inherent’ chthonic powers, apparently available to every woman (tell that to the raped women in Bosnia-Herzegovina!), and Ann Kaplan’s (1989) early examination of Madonna’s rise to stardom in Rocking Around the Clock, Harris also mentions the Lacanian Madonna of Marjorie Garber, who says that the singer’s recent tendency to squeeze her crotch like a man while singing “emblematize[s] the Lacanian triad of having, being and seeming,” the Foucaultian Madonna of Charles Wells, who claims that in her videos she is instructing us with a Foucaultian flair in the “end of woman,” the Baudrillardian Madonna of Kathy Schwichtenberg, who reads “Madonna’s figuration against the backdrop of Baudrillardian theory,” or the Marxist Madonna single-handedly undermines “capitalist constructions” and “rejects core bourgeois epistemes.” There is even the Freudian Madonna of Barbara Bradby. First published in the conservative journal The Nation, Harris’s condemnation of academics who ascribe to popular culture’s “potential to radicalize the huddled masses by providing typically quiescent MTV viewers with a subversive forum ...[so they] can actively challenge reactionary patriarchal ideologies’ (32), should be seen as an indicator that much of the so-called radical potential has more bark than bite in the broader context of hegemonic reproduction.

Just how do adolescent girls and boys work out their social and sexual relations within a patriarchy following Madonna’s site/sight/cite of resistance? Fiske admits that in his study of adolescent female responses to Madonna were only ‘struggling’ to find counter-rhetorical meanings (Fiske, 1989b:125; 189c:174). Shouldn’t the quality of their responses be critiqued against other possibilities of sexual relations offered as alternatives by other feminists—social feminists, for instance, who have a structural understanding of dominance? Should Madonna’s own ‘feminist’ image as the site of semiotic struggle be celebrated as the model of as the best form of resistance against patriarchy today? That is to say, as Paglia’s chthonic woman who laughs at such authority, and who can use her sexuality for her own gain; like the old joke of Mae West: “I climbed up the ladder of success, ‘wrong by wrong.’ ” To what extent should the ‘Rriot Grrrl’ phenomenon (Gyongyosi, 1995; Reynolds, 1995)—which follows Madonna, Courtney Love and the Bikini Kill’s manifestation in a “Revolution Girl-Style Now”—be seen...
as a sign as a reaction to the symptoms of patriarchy rather than a political symbolic challenge to it (see McGuigan, 1992: 90). 'Lady Di' was once the Madonna to the Royal Throne before her untimely death. She had been paraded as a feminist figure by Camilla Paglia because of her divorce from Prince Charles. She was a site/sight of resistance to Royalty, and to patriarchy. Her image and clothes were the new bricolaged signs of independence, strength and self-construction. Fergie, who had paved the way towards such 'freedom' before her through her own divorce, was just too heavy and clumsy to be made into a royal spectacle. She had to lose weight and promote dietary products before that could happen. Lady Di's bouts of suicide and bulimia had been successfully incorporated into her image as overcoming all odds that patriarchy could throw in her way. Even her romance with Dodi Fayed could be interpreted as yet another defiant 'slap in the face' towards the Royal Family. On a similar note, soap opera star Joan Collins is a self-proclaimed feminist, because she too, as a strong woman, can stare down patriarchy as it 'looks' at her in the face, and show off her 50+ body in Playboy as a sign of 'youth.' In Zha Gabor's case, also a self-proclaimed feminist star, the 'look' was even slapped right back. No policeman was ever going to give her a parking ticket!

These are instances of individual, romanticized resistance where libidinal pleasure is given too much credit for its disruptive capabilities. What kind of patriarchal men are we talking about here who are being (metaphorically) kicked back in the groin? Surely not all men (as clerics, policemen, members of royalty) belong to this 'patriarchal' category, and surely there are other forms of (pleasurable) sexual politics that avoid outright exhibitionism to shock in the name of equality? Yes, Madonna's love of herself may be read as 'potentially' a form of resistance by teenage girls who gain greater self-esteem, but Madonna's body is a typification of the advertised model (and Lady Di was more photogenic than Fergie). Madonna's body sells in films and in books. It invites the male gaze. It appears exposed in Playboy, in her book Sex, and in girlish poses inviting pedophilia in Vanity Fair. Are these merely prudish remarks? At what point do these contradictions outweigh her acclaimed resistant contribution for the emancipation of women? Should she be celebrated for her 'sexual emancipation,' or criticized for exploiting people of color, gays and lesbians, and marginal sexual subcultures for her own ends (hooks, 1992: 157-159)? From the viewpoint being argued here, the polysemic array of contradictory positions of Madonna's persona makes her (or any star like her) the perfect 'bloc buster' consumable object of 'flexible capitalism.' The rapidity of changes she has undergone in fashion, sex, and image enables her to be a 'chaotic personality' who must adapt herself to the changing kaleidoscope of conditions quickly and flexibly if she is to successfully exploit the opportunities that become available—no different than any other 'broker' working the market of desire. She is a master at it.

Although I would not disagree that textual 'poaching' goes on by fans all the time (Jenkins, 1992), but such a practice must be placed against the broader material conditions that shape fan response. Bourdieu's (1984) injunction that fandom can be identified as a proletarian cultural practice, is, by itself, not enough. Skinhead Nazis bands also have group following, but the production of secondary texts by their fans could never be identified as 'progressive' by virtue of them being 'fans' alone, even if they are extremely creative in such productions. No one would identify their productions as being apolitical. Without a critique of the broader social implications of their actions, there is no way to condemn such practice; no ground to judge their social effects. This is the same problem with Fiske's (1989b) reading of Madonna. True, she may be a contradictory phenomenon, read both 'against the grain' in her stances towards Church, patriarchy,
exhibitionism, bondage and pedophilia, as well as 'with the grain' as the 'Benetton Queen' of self-marketing, but what are the costs of her capitalist complicity and her fandom? That seems to be a question that popular culture theorists of resistance must responsibly answer. Is Michael Jackson's crusade to save the 'children of the world' through the backing of Pepsi Cola a clever ploy on their part to make profit, or is it he 'manipulating' them for the 'greater benefit of humankind'? Is their mutual complicity worth the specularity of their acclaimed 'good deed'? I know what a skeptic like myself would say.

Keith Tester (1994:86ff) has pointed out the moral hypocrisy of the Live Aid movement in the mid-80s. Such complicity overlooks how the creation of a capitalist star system denies other less 'spectacular' forms of democratic participation in human aid, i.e., school children's food banks, congregational Church collections for the needy, the thousands of packages sent overseas by relatives of loved ones to the have-not countries. A spectacular society overlooks these more modest gestures of love and help. Analogously, Lady Diana's generosity and work with sick children cannot be divorced from the spectacular role that Royalty plays in parading itself as a humanitarian institution which then helps to legitimate their privilege and wealth. And why is Prince Charles especially interested in saving historical buildings? Doesn't this 'heritage mania' have everything to do with nationalism and a particular form of social identity? Should it be surprising to note that the architects were the first to release themselves from the confines of their guilds so as to work for profit, and that postmodern pastiche first appears in architecture to promote the 'signed' corporate building?

**Consumerist Resistance? Shop 'Till You Drop**

Other than bad mouthing these 'romantic' forms of resistance perhaps it all comes down to a question of degree? What kinds of resistances are more likely to open up and change the system? This is the more difficult question. Which are the more radical as opposed to the more romantic forms of agency? Derrida's notion of 'play' is important in this context. For Derrida, play is not equated with unbounded freedom, rather play refers to the possible disruptive strategies within the prevailing system of thought. It is more like the 'play' a machine part has in the larger machinery. If there was no 'play' the machine could not function properly, yet this also means that the system will eventually break down, or collapse. "In order for history to have taken place, in its turbulence and in its stases, in order for hegemonies to have imposed themselves during a determinate period, there must have been a certain play in all these structures, hence a certain instability, or non-identity, nontransparency" (Derrida, 1988:145). If a machine part refuses to play, or if it begins to redefine its function, or starts an engine 'knock,' such 'ludic resistance' has to be given its due. But it still remains a question of the quality of the 'knock.' STP can always be added to smooth things out, and often is. Libidinal consumerist pleasures appear to be late capitalism's answer, what Marcuse (1964/1991:76) once called the manufacture of the 'happy consciousness' in capitalism.

The point of this whole discussion is to be wary of a 'resistance for resistance sake' thesis. Fiske's (1989c: 159-194) discussion on the politics of resistance in his final chapter is helpful in this regard. Following Laclau (1977), Fiske makes several distinctions that differentiate the more conservative 'democratic populism' from radical populist movements. 'Democratic populism' is a liberal-pluralist view, which simply integrates difference through compliance into the state system so that conflicts and resistances are neutralized. Hegemony, in this instance, is overdetermined as all conflict is absorbed under a pluralist ideology, such as multiculturalism. Two further Laclauian differentiations, 'popular' and 'populist' oppositions differ from 'democratic populism' by virtue of their antagonistic relationship to state power. 'Popular' oppositionality is integrated within the state system...
as a response to conflict over its hegemony, but this resistance is experienced as an overt oppression. Hence, there is not the complicity of 'democratic populism,' rather this 'popular' resistance keeps state hegemony on its edge. At certain socio-historical moments this 'popular' opposition turns into 'populist' radical movements that directly challenge state power.

Laclau's typology does not entirely satisfy Fiske. His point is that 'progressive popular culture' at the micro level identifies capitalist societies (Laclau's 'popular' oppositionality), and is a precondition to populist radical movements. The difficulty, however, seems to be differentiating 'democratic populism' from Fiske's 'progressive popular culture' since his category, and many of his examples, are not overtly identifiable by antagonism and oppression (as they are with Laclau), but can just as well be read as compliant practices. Nowhere are there examples given where popular resistant forms are shown to transform into radical populist movements without the necessity of requiring a broader structural social critique. The everyday is limiting without some form of conscientization. It becomes very difficult to accept Fiske's (1990) reading of the consumerism by women in patriarchy as a resistant pleasure in quiz shows (i.e., The Price is Right). This, in my mind, is a prime example of 'democratic populism' at work by the industry, which his analysis of The Newlywed Game also recapitulates. The distinction between work and leisure, set up by capitalist practice and inverted by women shopping for themselves, or displaying their consumption skills on The Price is Right, is hardly a liberating practice! It does, of course, recognize women's agency, and goes beyond any simple equation that women are mere commodities of exchange of capitalism, simply objectified 'beings.' However, it should not be forgotten that in the malls, the capitalist fashion industry targets the buying power of middle-class women. It sets the limits of consumption. On this particular quiz show, capitalism targets lower socio-economic groups. There is a qualifiable difference between women's experience of quiz show consumerism and Fiske's resistant explanation as to how it differs from normal patriarchal practices in the home. These behaviors are not necessarily transferable. Often there is a gap between behavior in a game like-situation and lived-reality in the family, i.e., the fantasy of the game sustains the oppression that is experienced at home. Fiske has idealized the 'home' and the 'family' as having more of a command over their purchasing power than is possible in order to assure his argument of resistant practice. The practice about being 'clever' regards to shopping can just as easily be interpreted as a question of 'survival,' rather than resistance.

The idea that consumer mall shopping by women and youthful 'window shopping' (Fiske, 1989b, Chap. 2) are forms of resistant pleasure seem to indicate the height of impoverishment for such theorizing. While shopping at a mall, Fiske reads a card in a shop selling cards and gifts: "When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping." This is interpreted as a parody on masculine power, mocking the usual call to arms. Pushed further, this interpretation is taken as the achievement of an oppositional, competitive act—"as a source of achievement, self-esteem, and power" (1989b:19). But what if this is an expression of inadequacy, or lack? What if shopping, especially by middle-class women who can afford to do so, is simply another capitalist form of desire to colonize leisure? Mary Ann Doane (1989) and Jackie Stacey (1994) have made explicit the complicity between cinema, the star system, and the consumerism of women as its spectators. "If the film frame is a kind of display window and spectatorship consequently a form of window-shopping, the intimate association of looking and buying does indeed suggest that the prototype of the spectator-consumer is female" (Doane, 1989: 27). Sports, a middle-class to upper class pre-occupation, have become a major source of capitalist gain, i.e., sportswear and equipment. It seems to me that the entire fashion and sports industry can join in the chorus begun by the
advertising genius of Virginia Slims in singing: "You've come a long way, baby." In the public sphere, the power of shopping for clothes (bargains), or the power of elevating the knowledge of commodity prices by lower socio-economic women through the public quiz shows, as inversions of the private sphere, have been successfully appropriated by capitalism as the progress of women's 'liberation' under its 'democratic' umbrella.

This is 'democratic popularism' at its rhetorical best. Fiske's reading is intelligible only if such inversions are seen as resistant empowered practices. He again seems to contradict himself when he writes, "Such a move may not be radical in that it does not challenge the right of patriarchy to offer these pleasures to men more readily than women, but it can be seen as both progressive and empowering insofar as it opens up masculine pleasures to women" (Fiske, 1989b: 41, emphasis added). Read from the perspective of post-Fordian capitalism and 'post-patriarchal' viewpoints, such spending power by middle-class women can be easily accommodated, and liberal feminism appeased. In fact it enables a quicker turnover rate for 'batch' and designer commodities. The ambiguous space between public and private, work and leisure, the privacy of the home, and its public availability through the communication lines of the telephone, television and the VCR, have been successfully invaded by capitalism as a further example of 'democratic pluralism.' Television shopping continues to grow in popularity. Tactics such as price tag changing, stealing off the rack, pilfering, and trying on clothes without buying them, have been successfully curbed through surveillance cameras, passing on the cost of theft to the consumer and, in some department stores at least, limiting the number of clothes that are allowed to be tried on. To say that shopping tactics help consumers maintain their 'morale' (Fiske, 1989b: 33) appears gratuitous when the broader implications of 'flexible capitalism' (Harvey, 1989) are considered.

Talk of the mall and window-shopping as resistant forms are therefore, especially disheartening. Lewis (1990) argues that for girls, the mall represents a female substitute for the streets of male adolescents. Female spectatorship in the mall becomes the primary site for the consumption of stars and musical videotexts. One mall in California has been nicknamed 'the Madonna mall' because so many girls shop there who want to look like her. Lewis also mentions the promotion of 'Madonna land' and a Madonna look-alike contest by Macy's Department Store in 1985. Madonna wanna-be's then strutted their stuff on both MTV and the ABC Evening News, in front of Peter Jennings. "On camera, they gushed that they too 'wanted to be famous' and 'be looked at' like their idol, Madonna" (Lewis, 1990:101). Cindy Lauper's style, to a lesser degree, has also been promoted by Junior's department stores at shopping malls where integrating music video displays has become a standard form of indirect advertisement. (The producers of American Idol have now turned such desire by young people into a productive capitalist machine.)

One would think that the exploitation of girls by the capitalist market would be self-evident in these examples for Lewis. But that is not the case. Lewis reads this practice against the grain of a male youth culture whose leisure practices exclude girls. As a result, fashion, shopping, and personal style become the complementary world of female cultural activity. Nowhere does it occur to Lewis that the very gendering of these leisure spaces furthers the market exploitation, especially of the middle-class youth. She concludes her article between the relationship of girls' consumerism and the market with:

Consumer culture has economic consequences, but it is still resilient and responsive to consumer interaction. Girl consumer culture is not merely a reproductive incorporation, for in practice,
it branches into a gendered support system for girls. Similarly, MTV videos may codify male adolescent ideology, but they also allow female authors and audiences to command their own symbolic vision.

(Lewis, 1990: 101, emphasis added).

This sounds like the good old fashion laissez-faire capitalism serving the needs of the public (more specifically, middle-class girls). I have italicized the rhetorical words that persuade us to believe that the benevolence of the consumer market is there to support rather than codify and construct adolescent ideology, and that the question of agency in this context can even be described as a command! again, a vivid example of democratic populism.'

In contrast I draw the reader to an extraordinary insightful and rich article by Martin Roberts (1991), ‘Mutations of the Spectacle: Vitrines, Arcades, Mannequins,’ who examines the historical developments of the birth of the arcades and grands magasins. But unlike Bowlby’s (1985) laudation of this particular public sphere as being a safe haven for women to exert their buying power (whom Fiske supports), or following Miller (1981) and Chaney (1983) analysis of arcade life whom Jane Gains approvingly cites for her study of female consumerism (1990:14). Martin’s historical analysis provides a psychoanalytic explanation of capitalist consumerist desire as it can be traced from the developments of the window display (vitrine) to the introduction of the display mannequin, which today has become the live model of fashion (mannequin meaning literally ‘model’ in French); and the ‘frozen’ live model posing in the mall who evokes the ‘wax museum’ aesthetics that further quotes the ‘stilled’ objects on display in the day long advertising cable channels. In contrast, the Situationists in the late ’50s and early ’60s (i.e., Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, Henri Lefebvre) tried to provide a strategy to overcome the effects of capitalist desire through the vitrine, to move from being merely a flâneur of the vitrine to make walking an active and critical dérive (drift). The dérive meant walking, i.e., drifting through the city, studying “psychogeographical effects” which were the effects of the urban geographical environment on the emotions and behavior of individuals. Roberts finishes his essay by pointing to the developments of the télé-vitrine—television shopping that is sweeping the country—pointing out how television watching is so closely related to the vitrine of the nineteenth century. He then moves his discussion towards virtual reality (VR)—the most sophisticated vitrine of them all, where it is said that in the future we will be able to live in our fantasies.

Celeste Olalquiaga (1992) has taken Roberts’ thesis a step further. She argues that the urban culture, with its architectural transparency, "transforms shopping malls into continuous window displays where the homogeneity of store windows, stairs, elevators, and water fountains causes a perceptual loss, and shoppers are left wandering around in a maze” (1-2). This condition, identified as psychasthenia, is a disturbance in the relation between the self and the surrounding territory “in which the space defined by the coordinates of the organism’s own body is confused with represented space.” This is not a recent phenomenon. Mal de mall, a sort of ‘zombie effect’ has been identified as a similar condition that mall shoppers suffer by being caught up in its environment (Kowinski, 1985). Jameson (1983) has described this in part as a ‘waning of affect’ brought by the lack of direct experience of feelings, emotions, and sensations which are more effectively presented through media imagery of high-tech simulacra.

More recently Mestrovic (1997) has characterized this as a “postemotional society.” These effects of the contemporary urban experience have become the raw material for the futuristic dystopic projections of cyberpunk novels, e.g., Ridley Scott and William Gibson. I would argue, therefore, without a historical knowledge as to how we
arrived at our current simulated reality, without having a radical psychology to overcome it, identity formations will be recuperated to continue capitalist patriarchal reproduction.

What I perceived as being argued by some feminist authors in such books as Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body (Gaines and Herzog, 1990), is the use of the traditional accouterments of 'femininity' as sources of power: strong women to combat strong men. Amazons, Medusas, Academic Madonnas like Paglia, steal back the 'look' so as to control the look of others upon themselves to achieve identity through style; a form of resistance—yes! A possible broader social transformation of patriarchy—no! Herzog (1990:159) has it right when she argues that 'the look' is meant for both women and for men, "the male perspective is assimilated into what she thinks is her own critical eye." Herzog equates this 'look' with the "shopper's eye" and concludes: "If we were to thoroughly probe the answers to this question [For Whom Do Women Dress?], we might find that the arguments as to whether they dress for men, other women, or themselves would break around lines of gender, social class, and sexual preference" (ibid.) I agree. Diana Fuss (1992) has called this a "homospectatorial look." The fashion industry becomes an institutionalized space "where women can look at other women with cultural impunity. It provides a socially sanctioned structure in which women are encouraged to consume, in voyeuristic if not vampiristic fashion, the images of other women, frequently represented in classically exhibitionist and sexually provocative poses" (713-714).

Gender confusion and the ambiguities of cross-dressing (Butler, 1990; Kuhn, 1985: 48-54, Haraway, 1991, Garber, 1992), 'performatives acts' more prone to middle-class women it should be added, are caught up in plays of difference which are hardly "distressing to patriarchal culture" as Jane Gains (1990:27) seems to conclude. Marlene Dietrich's (Studlar, 1990: 248) appeal to both straight and lesbian women as enabling 'spectatorial identification' with and desire for the powerful femme fatale, is still caught up in masochistic fetishism. Whether Dietrich's change of sexual identity through cross-dressing subverts patriarchal power relations and heterosexual norms is surely questionable; "fascinatingly elusive" as Studlar, herself concludes. The fashion industry has successfully began to market 'cross-dressing' and male narcissism, which is often attributed to gay men. Bikini briefs for men and boxer shorts for women are the most innocuous examples. Witness the incorporation of such differences into advertising. Androgyny abounds if it can sell and target such 'resistance' for profit.

**Concluding Thoughts:**

**The Necessity of Political Economy**

The rhetorical arguments that have been presented here are a cautionary tale against the tendency to over-romantic resistance in cultural studies. (This, by necessity, extends to visual cultural studies as well.) It does not end with a prescription list, which ranks antagonistic resistant practices as to the force of their democratic discourse. It seems to me those theorists of the postmodern who still find it worth their while to rework Marxist concepts of political economy to the changed conditions of postindustrial capitalism, e.g., David Harvey (1989), Fredric Jameson, Susan Willis (1991), feminist social materialists such as Hennessy (1993), Ebert (1996), Landry & McLean (1993), Geyer-Ryan (1994), still provide a persuasive argument as to how global capitalism continues to exploit women in the third world through sweatshop-like conditions; how the incorporation of women in the workforce in post-industrial countries has made them all the poorer; how different forms of patriarchal sweat shops employing women have been imported in post-industrial countries by various ethnic groups sub-contracting themselves to business; how 'postfeminism' is reinstating the woman as mother and homemaker through the rhetorics of the New Woman; and how new dystopic forms of alienation appear as epiphenomenas as more and more women enter the workforce. On this last point, Harvey's
(1989) broad attempt to understand “flexible capitalism”—designer capitalism—as doing away with the time between production and consumption to insure, so to speak, a pure burn of profit dollars, has been brilliantly applied to the way (white middle-class) women, who have entered the work force, are positioned inside this capitalist circuit of production and consumption as described by Willis (1991). I would agree with her more recent assessment of hard-core subculture in America: “Subcultural groups may appropriate, use, recycle, and redefine cultural commodities, but their practices don’t change capitalism as a mode of production. The spectacular designates the difference between cultural practice as a response to capitalism and political practice, which might have cultural dimensions but which does not aim at the transformation of capitalism” (Willis, 1993: 366). Sobering, once taken to heart.

To be fair to Fiske, he is sympathetic to a historical materialist analysis of postmodernity as well, claiming that postmodern theory belongs to the middle and upper classes who are able to achieve a degree of freedom through the play of signs. As he says,

Such a celebration of freedom expressed an individual creativity is a highly political depoliticization of culture, for it refuses to acknowledge the most fundamental of all constraints of economic necessity and socio-political subordination. It also disguises the social distinction between those who are able to evade these constraints and those who are not. For those whose material conditions of life remind them everyday of the omnipresence of these constraints, postmodernism is not an option. ...The postmodern needs grounding in social materialism.

(Fiske, 1991b:65-66, emphasis added)

Like Fiske, Kobena Mercer (1992:447) also speaks of “struggles over the sign.” He doesn’t avoid making hard choices that go on with the sign displacements from nigger/ Negro/ Black/ Afro-American/ African American. Nor does he avoid the issue of the misguided self-defeating coalitions, as in the rhetorics of “the black male as an endangered species.” Here, differentiations are made between ‘progressive popular resistance’ and more regressive coalitional forms, but this becomes possible with the backdrop of a historical materialism—periodizing the politics and identity of ‘1968’ in his case. A political economy plays a role in his cultural theory without being reduced to an economism. The urgency of a political agenda remains. Likewise, Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing is a T-shirt war of signs between the violent activism of Malcolm X and the pacifism of Martin Luther’s peace marches set against the contemporary society of racist America. Although its deconstructive text gives us an enigmatic “do the right thing,” offering us a Lyotadian (1988) différence of impossibility, Lee does not lose sight of the urgency of racial struggle and the experience of nihilism, especially as experienced by the African American male in the decay of urban communities. The same may be said of Spivak’s (1988) earlier question, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Ultimately, her answer was “no.” If they could they would no longer be marginalized, and occupy the place of the subaltern. My point has been to identify the difficulties that pleasurable resistance brings to the Left leaning cultural critic—especially an exemplary one like John Fiske, and the difficulty of choice that must be made so as not to fall into perpetually romancing the ‘stone’ of resistance as ‘democratic populism.’ This is a challenge to all aspects of cultural studies, including specifically visual ones as well.
Notes

1 While this was written in 1998, Michael Jackson still continues to be embroiled in pedophilic accusations.

2 The argument, as developed in "Unromancing the Stone of 'Resistance'" (jagodzinski 2003), was that jouissance, as Fiske employs the term from Barthes via Lacan, is closer to pleasure (plaisir) than ecstasy where its disruptive effects are already contained within the accepted and established social laws.

3 Kaplan (1989) in her study of MTV anecdotally remarks that she was unable to obtain permission to fix an image of Madonna on her cover since her persona was changing. Since then she has moved from her "boy toy" image in the early '80s to the ambiguity of "Who's that Girl" in the mid- to late '80s, ending with her (even) more erotic phase—"Blonde Ambition" tour, and so on. This has become common fare for many entertainers—to get a "make-over" that amounts to another morphing alter ego, complete, at times, with plastic surgery to the face and breasts.

4 Fiske's discussion of Elvis (1993) referred to earlier, is premised on his previous assessment of Madonna as an icon where the personal and social meet. Such stars might be interpreted as "nodal points" where a number of sliding signifiers are finally fixed. What I am arguing is that the identification of such nodal points doesn't let the critic off the hook from the "difficulty" of making a critical assessment as to which way he or she throws her intellectual weight. This is a concrete problem of history. False consciousness as a concept may be over, but the question of ethical choice that underlay the concept in the first place still remains, i.e., how do you judge the performance of a Madonna, a Michael Jackson, for that matter, anyone that commands power in a spectacular society?

5 As McGuigan (1992:70) remarks, many feminists would disagree with Fiske's assessment of Madonna's resistance to patriarchy. He names Diana Simmonds, Judith Williamson and Cheryl Garratt. We can add to this list: Wiseman (1993); Lloyd (1993); Pribram (1992); See also Kellner (1995: Chap.8).

6 By "post-patriarchal" I mean that even managers and executives have to be sensitive and 'feminized' today to ensure sales. The old authoritarian masculinity no longer 'sells.' Wall Street knows this as well, as does the Harvard Business School. (cf. Lasch, 1984).

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Postmodern Art Education in Practice

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What does postmodern art education look like in practice? Although there have been many discussions of postmodern art education in the professional literature, there have been few curricular resources that provide concrete examples of content and strategies to help teachers apply postmodern concepts in practice. The Web site Spiral Art Education offers practical approaches to postmodern art education with emphases on artmaking, contemporary art, and critical perspectives. We review and critique the Spiral projects from a social theory perspective, paying special attention to issues of silence discussed in our article “Schooled in Silence,” published in this volume of the Journal of Social Theory in Art Education.

We begin with an overview of the components of the site. Sections of the Spiral site include information about Spiral Workshop, a Saturday morning art program directed by Olivia Gude at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), and the UIC Contemporary Community Curriculum Initiative (CCC), a project in which art teachers, preservice teachers, art education professors, and other art professionals collaborated to develop innovative art curricula for middle school and high school classrooms. The Web site also has sections that contain articles about postmodern art education, background information about the UIC Art Education Program, and a profile of faculty member Olivia Gude, the Spiral site editor. The largest section and centerpiece of the site, aptly titled “Cool Curriculum,” is a collection of art projects that were developed and taught through the Spiral Workshop and CCC. The collection of projects represents a record of experimentation and innovation, rather than a definitive or comprehensive curriculum for postmodern practice. “Spiral” art education refers to “innovative approaches to middle school and high school art curriculum developed by research projects spiraling out from the UIC Art Education Program” (Spiral Art Education home page, ¶ 1).

In the Spiral Workshop, preservice teachers in Art Education work with teens from the Chicago area to create forms of art education that are “rooted in the stories and concerns of the students and their communities through connecting the practices of contemporary artmaking with the practices of contemporary pedagogy” (Spiral Art Education, Spiral Workshop, ¶ 2). The Workshop is both “a studio where teen artists can explore artmaking in a cultural studies context” and “a laboratory to develop curriculum projects that can be taught in middle school and high school art classrooms” (Spiral Art Education, Spiral Workshop, ¶ 3). The Workshop groups, organized around themes and techniques, conclude with a show of the students’ work and a community reception. Teen artists in the Spiral Workshop are encouraged to investigate visual phenomena in relation to concepts such as “the real,” “the natural,” “the normal,” and other socially constructed ideas. For example, in 1998 the Chiaroscuro Spiral Workshop group investigated constructions of race and color in U.S. society. In 1999 the Reality Check group considered reality and representation in imagery, and the differences between the teens'
experiences of Chicago and the way the city is represented in tourist-oriented postcards. In 1999 the Thought Patterns group investigated visual patterns and colors as signifiers of masculinity and femininity. From the perspective of UIC faculty and student teachers, Workshop projects are “interventions and additions” to current forms of art education, not a “new orthodoxy” based on current discourse in art. They see their work as educators as “an eclectic, postmodern approach to curriculum construction. We pick through curriculum artifacts, refurbish what is still useful, discard what is no longer necessary, and introduce entirely new contents when needed” (Spiral Art Education, Spiral Workshop, ¶ 5).

The Contemporary Community Curriculum Initiative (CCC) is a collaboration between the UIC Art Education Program, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, and the Chicago Public Schools. In 2000, twenty-five urban and suburban teachers participated in a semester-long workshop series at UIC and the Museum of Contemporary Art. The CCC Initiative ascribed to the belief that “teachers who collaboratively contextualize the making, understanding, and valuing of art within larger cultural frameworks of community, identity, agency, democratic control, and quality of everyday life, will create dynamic curriculum that engages students in learning about art through authentically representing contemporary cultural discourses” (Spiral Art Education, CCC Initiative, Introduction, ¶ 1). Participants in these CCC workshops developed most of the projects in the Cool Curriculum section of the Spiral site.

Art Education Articles, another section of the Spiral site, presents theoretical foundations of the curriculum created by teachers in the CCC and pre-service teachers in the Spiral Workshop. The articles present curricular theory, postmodern theory, and semiotic theory. Additionally, a manifesto of what comprises a quality postmodern art curriculum stresses that the curriculum should be rooted in the life experiences of the students, teachers, and in artmaking. Furthermore, the curriculum should be multi-cultural, fun, organic, emphasize contradictions and complexities; not be “obsessed with comprehensiveness or fundamental skills,” develop “aesthetic sophistication, and proactive people”; and be democratic in seeking “input for choosing artworks to be studied” (Spiral Art Education, Art Education Articles, “Rubric for a Quality Art Curriculum,” ¶ 25, 31, & 11).

The Cool Curriculum section contains sixteen art projects, four developed in Spiral Workshops and twelve developed through the Contemporary Community Curriculum Initiative. A description of each project is organized into five parts: introduction of ideas or issues that were explored in the project; complete process plans, including handouts used in the project; samples of images and/or installations produced by students or teachers; sources of information about artists discussed in the project; and other contextual information. In some cases, the description includes a sixth part—variations of projects that were tried out with different groups. Materials used in the projects range from low tech to high tech, scratchboard to digital editing. Many of the projects combine text with images. All are related to contemporary art forms and provide accessible language for understanding current practices and concepts such as installation.

Six of the projects seem to us to be especially relevant to breaking the silence in art education, as discussed in our article “Schooled in Silence.” At the end of our article, we suggested art education strategies to “expose the unmarked, re-envision how they are marked, reveal what is absent, and critique the prevalent cultural stories in visual culture.” We looked for projects that exposed inequality and envisioned a future based in participatory democratic principles and practices. The Spiral projects we see as being especially relevant to breaking silence in art education are Elementary “I,” Power of Advertising, Big
Questions, Autobiographical Comics, Color Coding, and Drawing Color Lines.

UIC's Contemporary Community Curriculum Initiative workshops began with Elementary "I," a project whose goal was to have teachers reflect upon their elementary school years by creating a "conceptual map" of what they noticed and thought about at that age. The project encouraged introspection of discursive space as "the possible or potential space that exists within various school situations" (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Elementary "I," Introduction, ¶ 5). These aesthetic investigations into one's early artmaking in school experiences raise issues from personal narratives of school art culture. The Elementary "I" project assumes that "encountering our own earlier selves" will allow teachers to better connect with the lives of their young students (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Elementary "I," Introduction, ¶ 4). Paying attention to what is marked and unmarked in cultural memories is pronounced when pre-service teachers share and compare their stories. Additionally, the re-envisioning of discursive space surrounding school art curricula prepares pre-service teachers to depart from teaching the way in which they were taught.

The Power of Advertising project was developed by Austin Community Academy students for the CCC Initiative, under the direction of art teacher Tracy Van Dulnen. The project introduced students to contemporary artists who "use the style and sometimes the means of mass media" to make social and political statements (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Power of Advertising, Introduction, ¶ 2). This process led urban youth, through text and image, to make statements about "education, police brutality, black and white violence, teen pregnancy, fatherless homes, self esteem, and other issues that affect their lives" (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Power of Advertising, Introduction, ¶ 3). By marking what is commonly unmarked in the media, the students broke the silence about their lived reality. The artmaking merged new technical and conceptual processes with familiar processes, such as black-and-white digital photography combined with large scale photocopying. Color was added with colored pencils or tempera paint to retell the media stories from the students' perspectives.

Big Questions is a project that was developed in the Portrait of a Young Artist group of the 2001 Spiral Workshop. For this project, teachers wanted students to consider questions of why we are here and why we do what we do in our lives. These important questions are commonly considered by artists, but the teachers recognized that many teens feel shy about revealing too much of themselves in a school environment. To make such inquiry more comfortable, students were offered a position of "deniability" by portraying themselves as superhero characters. Students could say to themselves, "I'm not really asking these questions; my superhero character is" (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Big Questions, Introduction, ¶ 4). Students altered digital photographs of themselves and placed their superhero characters in dramatic scenes of their home city. They added text to the images to convey their superheroes' thoughts and powers. Voices often absent from prevalent cultural narratives are presented in this project to break personal silences in a way that exposes through an alter ego.

The CCC project Autobiographical Comics was developed by visiting artist Heather McAdams. In this project, art teachers and students created comic strips that explored interesting moments in their lives. Many of the comics had narrative structures, but others were composed as lists. The project gave voice to students' experiences. "Students appreciate being given the knowledge and skills to tell stories about their lives in a medium that they find exciting. ... Comics can be printed in school and local newspapers or used to create shows about contemporary student life" (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum,
Questions, Autobiographical Comics, Color Coding, and Drawing Color Lines.

UIC’s Contemporary Community Curriculum Initiative workshops began with Elementary “I,” a project whose goal was to have teachers reflect upon their elementary school years by creating a “conceptual map” of what they noticed and thought about at that age. The project encouraged introspection of discursive space as “the possible or potential space that exists within various school situations” (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Elementary “I,” Introduction, ¶ 5). These aesthetic investigations into one’s early artmaking in school experiences raise issues from personal narratives of school art culture. The Elementary “I” project assumes that “encountering our own earlier selves” will allow teachers to better connect with the lives of their young students (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Elementary “I,” Introduction, ¶ 4). Paying attention to what is marked and unmarked in cultural memories is pronounced when pre-service teachers share and compare their stories. Additionally, the re-envisioning of discursive space surrounding school art curricula prepares pre-service teachers to depart from teaching the way in which they were taught.

The Power of Advertising project was developed by Austin Community Academy students for the CCC Initiative, under the direction of art teacher Tracy Van Dulnen. The project introduced students to contemporary artists who “use the style and sometimes the means of mass media” to make social and political statements (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Power of Advertising, Introduction, ¶ 2). This process led urban youth, through text and image, to make statements about “education, police brutality, black and white violence, teen pregnancy, fatherless homes, self esteem, and other issues that affect their lives” (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Power of Advertising, Introduction, ¶ 3). By marking what is commonly unmarked in the media, the students broke the silence about their lived reality. The artmaking merged new technical and conceptual processes with familiar processes, such as black-and-white digital photography combined with large scale photocopying. Color was added with colored pencils or tempera paint to retell the media stories from the students’ perspectives.

Big Questions is a project that was developed in the Portrait of a Young Artist group of the 2001 Spiral Workshop. For this project, teachers wanted students to consider questions of why we are here and why we do what we do in our lives. These important questions are commonly considered by artists, but the teachers recognized that many teens feel shy about revealing too much of themselves in a school environment. To make such inquiry more comfortable, students were offered a position of “deniability” by portraying themselves as superhero characters. Students could say to themselves, “I’m not really asking these questions; my superhero character is’ ” (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum, Big Questions, Introduction, ¶ 4). Students altered digital photographs of themselves and placed their superhero characters in dramatic scenes of their home city. They added text to the images to convey their superheroes’ thoughts and powers. Voices often absent from prevalent cultural narratives are presented in this project to break personal silences in a way that exposes through an alter ego.

The CCC project Autobiographical Comics was developed by visiting artist Heather McAdams. In this project, art teachers and students created comic strips that explored interesting moments in their lives. Many of the comics had narrative structures, but others were composed as lists. The project gave voice to students’ experiences. “Students appreciate being given the knowledge and skills to tell stories about their lives in a medium that they find exciting. ... Comics can be printed in school and local newspapers or used to create shows about contemporary student life” (Spiral Art Education, Cool Curriculum,
Autobiographical Comics, Introduction, ¶ 4). The humor and satirical comic format encourages students to re-envision how they are marked.

"Color Coding," an article by Olivia Gude, describes a project that disrupts the "fixed set of descriptive qualities" of the hue circle, value and chroma scales commonly and repeatedly taught throughout the K-12 art education experience, sometimes even into foundation courses in college (Spiral Art Education, Art Education Articles, "Color Coding," ¶ 2). Instead, the postmodern color project begins by having students look at works that use double coding informed by "hybrids of various cultural traditions" (Spiral Art Education, Art Education Articles, "Color Coding," ¶ 8). In these works examining the systems that verifies and researching for other possible ways of knowing problematize "verifiable" scientific color theory. The Web site provides divergent color theory models, and notes that some colors that can be seen do not fit in any model, such as "the electric blue of a butterfly wing" (Spiral Art Education, Art Education Articles, "Color Coding," ¶ 14). The project continues with disruption to commonly accepted knowledge about pure form and explores "cultural conventions of natural symbolism" (Spiral Art Education, Art Education Articles, "Color Coding," ¶ 14). Thus, students critique prevalent cultural stories about color from scientific explanations and perceptual observations.

"Drawing Color Lines," another article by Olivia Gude, describes a project that extends the knowledge of diverse cultural color symbolism to a critique for implications of racist intentions. Gude suggests strategies to subvert these unexamined uses of color to mark and unmark Black and White. The Drawing Color Lines project takes students through a critical process to problematize how race privilege is maintained in the symbolism of visual and spoken languages. Through the artmaking process involving black and white reversals of familiar cultural images, students recognize that "racial charged symbolism is an unchallenged part of our everyday" (Spiral Art Education, Art Education Articles, "Drawing Color Lines," ¶ 33).

The Spiral site is useful to art teachers, preservice teachers, university professors, and artist-teachers. The site is interesting, well organized, and easy to navigate. Spiral Art Education offers practical examples of postmodern art education that demonstrate ways we might incorporate contemporary ideas into art curricula and help break the forms of silence that protect privilege and power in U.S. society.

*Authors' Note: This is a true co-authored work with equal contributions from all of us and no first author. The order in which we list authors is based on a rotation we use in our collaborations on publications