The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education

OTHER(W)ise

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2009
Editor
Wanda B. Knight, The Pennsylvania State University

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to promote the use of theoretical concepts from the social sciences - which include, but are not limited to, anthropology, sociology and political science to study visual culture and the teaching of art; to inform art educators about theory and practice in the social sciences, thus acting as a liaison between social scientists and art educators; to encourage research into the social context of visual culture and teaching art; and to develop socially relevant programs for use in the teaching of art.

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Contributors

Melanie L. Buffington is currently an assistant professor of art education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research interests include teacher preparation, museum education, service learning, and technology in art education. Additionally, she is interested in the work of self-taught artists and how art is/can be used to generate social change. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to the author at mbuffington@vcu.edu

Wanda B. Knight is associate professor of art education at the Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests include explorations in visual culture, cultural studies, and preservice teacher education, particularly with respect to how oppressive behaviors, practices, and ways of thinking affect teaching and student learning. Correspondence regarding this editorial should be sent to the editor at wbkl0@psu.edu

Jan Jagodzinski is professor of visual art and media in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada where he teaches in the areas of postmodernity and media education. His theoretical orientation draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis and its application to visual culture and pedagogy. He serves on the advisor council of several journals in art/education and he has authored numerous book, book chapters, and manuscripts. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to the author at jj3@ualberta.ca

James Haywood Rolling, Jr. is a dual associate professor in art education and teaching and leadership at Syracuse University. Dr. Rolling earned his Ed.D. and Ed.M. in art education at Teachers College, Columbia University. His research interests include: arts-based research; the studio arts as research practice; visual culture and identity politics; curriculum theory; autoethnography; social justice; and narrative inquiry in qualitative research. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to the author at jrolling@syr.edu

Robert W. Sweeny is assistant professor of art and art education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania where he serves as coordinator of the art education program. He earned his Ph.D. in art education from the Pennsylvania State University in 2004. He has published widely on the topics of digital visual culture, digital aesthetics, and the relationship between surveillance, works of art, and the gaze. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to the author at bob.sweeny@iup.edu

Sara Wilson McKay is assistant professor of art education at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her research focuses on the ways in which works of art create new seeing, how looking can be a dialogic process, and the possibilities of seeing more of the educational process in and through art. Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to the author at swilsonmckay@vcu.edu
Editorial: Being OTHER(W)ise

Wanda B. Knight

While traveling in England during Spring 2009, I had the opportunity to see the London production of the musical Wicked, a prequel to a cultural icon ingrained in our nation’s psyche, the classic version of The Wizard of Oz. Told from the perspective of the alleged wicked witch, Wicked celebrates the obvious notion; there is anOTHER side to the standard story.

Most of us, at some point in our lives, can relate to being looked at as different or outsider, like the green-skinned, black-clad, smart, caring young lady, Elphaba, whom the Wizard’s propaganda machine demonized as wicked. From the play, we find out Elphaba wasn’t wicked after all; she was just misunderstood. Opening our minds and hearts to differing points of view can be likened to opening doors to new forms of knowledge otherwise unknown or unknown otherwise.¹

Knowledge: Otherwise Unknown or Unknown Otherwise

Volume 28/29 of the Journal of Social Theory in Art Education explores the theme OTHER(W)ise. The theme opened doors for contributing authors to focus on “the other,” and on different or otherwise untapped art topics, apart from supposed or expected topics. Moreover, it opened doors for them to look at other forms of wisdom and knowledge, and what constitutes that knowledge and wisdom, how it is organized and who is empowered to teach it, and just as critically, what qualifies as evidence of having learned it.

¹ The author of this editorial took the picture of the closed door on the cover of the journal, while traveling in Cambridge, England, Spring 2009.
In keeping with the spirit of the call for papers for Volume 28/29, the five contributing authors considered different methods and means to ensure that invisibility and silence of some forms of knowledge do not normalize others and, therefore, maintain their dominance. Moreover, other eyes as implied by the “ise” in OTHER(W)ise proved to be fodder for each author to introduce new perspectives that help shape the vision for the field of art education in exciting new directions we might not have explored otherwise.

Rolling introduces OTHER(W)ise through a series of narratives that highlight different categories of bodies, some not like the others—those that belong and others that do not belong. Sweeny focuses his article on a fantasy piece of classroom technology that allows teachers to have not only purported “eyes in the back of their heads” but eyes everywhere in the classroom. Buffington draws our attention to the technologies of Web 2.0, which she describes as being another means of creating knowledge for those who have Web access. Wilson McKay argues for transparency and vulnerability in self-other relations, touting their benefit in art education, while jagodzinski uses psychoanalytic deconstruction of two Journal of Art Education cover designs to bolster his argument for criticality in art education.

**Being Otherwise: Otherwise Being**

Far too often educators disregard the knowledge and wisdom that children from other cultures bring to the learning situation. Instead, teachers use their “socially positioned [cultural] lens” (Vavrus, 2002, p. 85) to draw conclusions about student competence, frequently labeling these children as failures because their backgrounds, languages, and cultures do not match theirs. As a perceived “other,” they are forced to resist dominant, narrow assumptions and acquire wisdom and knowledge, conduct, habits, and ways of being that prove they are otherwise.
In an article—titled *One of These Things Is Not Like the Other: Art Education and the Symbolic Interaction of Bodies and Self-Images*—inspired by an early 1970's song on “Sesame Street,” James Rolling explores self-image and identity through a series of narratives that demonstrate human tendency to formulate social positional distinctions that create in-group and out-group dynamics that privilege some over others. “Why isn’t art education included in the same category as reading, writing, and arithmetic as one of the essentials of a good education? Why isn’t art education like the others? Why are students of color overwhelmingly pathologized as a special education population in public schools?” (p. 14). “Why aren’t Black boys included in the same category as those taken for granted as able-bodied, able-minded, and normal? Why aren’t Black boys and girls like the others?” (p. 16). These critical questions, among others, pop up throughout Rolling’s article, highlighting issues that warrant our deepest consideration—if we as a whole are committed to increasing the quality of art/education and equity of opportunity for learners.

**Other Eyes**

Robert Sweeny’s article, *The Pedagopticon: Other Eyes in the 21st Century Classroom*, is not like the others as it is a satirical look at the growth of contemporary surveillance used in U.S. classrooms as a means to control student behavior and discipline, among other things. While the technologies described as the *Pedagopticon* are imagined, Sweeny indicates, “the mechanisms behind them are all too real” (p. 30). Sweeny does not claim that surveillance technologies are inherently bad, he does; however, raise ethical and political issues about the ubiquity of surveillance technologies in the classroom, and in everyday life and culture, claiming that “the Pedagopticon not only makes educational sense—it makes cents” (p. 40).
Other Wisdom

Like Sweeny, Melanie Buffington’s article focuses on newer technologies. Interpreting the journal theme, OTHER(W)ise, “as meaning other ways of being wise or alternative approaches to generating knowledge,” Buffington—in Other{wise}: The Myth of Wikipedia—highlights aspects of her experience, with Wikipedia, to emphasize opportunities and challenges presented by the technologies of Web 2.0 (p. 43). Following a critical examination of who creates content for the Web, how that content is created, whose ideas are represented, and who controls the information once it is released to the Web, Buffington concludes with a call to the field of art educators to create knowledge about art education on Wikipedia.

Similar to Buffington, Sara Wilson McKay calls on the field of art education to open doors to OTHER methods and means of increasing the quality of art education. In The Space Between: Intersubjective Possibilities of Transparency and Vulnerability in Art Education, Wilson McKay argues for an open attitude towards transparency and vulnerability in art education “in order to cultivate in our students ‘continual communication with, and responsibility to, concrete others’” (p. 73). Wilson McKay asserts that an open attitude toward transparency and vulnerability benefits both students and teachers in various ways. Further, she uses artwork and museum exhibitions as supporting examples to emphasize intersubjective relationships and social possibilities, touting that “It helps us see how important it is to see together. [And,] it helps us recognize we can never see the whole picture, and that relying on [anOTHER] to help us see more can minimize; yet, require personal vulnerability” (p. 73).

Jan Jagodzinski’s article, Thinking of the Frame Otherwise: Putting Art Education into the Abyss of the Real, uses a form of psychoanalytic deconstruction as a strategy to examine two 1998 Journal of Art Education cover designs, with the goal of challenging
the field to retain a critical art education. Otherwise, he cautions us, absent such “a tension and commitment, ... the picture of our ‘reality’ stays ‘rosy’ and the encounters with the Real is missed” (p. 95). Jagodzinski does not view art criticism so much as a hermeneutic act of criticism, but “a displacement of the act of looking as conditioned by the framed image so as to bring students to a condition of social, political, and ethical responsibility through a confrontation of the other” (p. 94). According to jagodzinski, this could prove to be one strategy among others “to continue the commitment to critical social transformations” (p. 96).

Returning briefly to *Wicked*, the musical that encourages us to look carefully at anOTHER side of the story, some forms of discourse in the United States remain as polarized as the good witch and the bad. However, collectively, the authors have dealt with topics related to otherness, other forms of wisdom, and other eyes. Even so, I challenge all art educators to locate a mirror and peer into your own eyes. Look intently until you see past the image in the mirror. Stare until you perceive the power within you to become the change you want to see. Hopefully, you will be motivated to face the prevailing winds by running against them, for a while.

I wish to extend a special thank you to the authors who contributed to this issue of the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, as well as to the reviewers who thoughtfully provided critical feedback. Further, I extend a special thank you to Karen Keifer-Boyd for her steady support and help in bringing this issue to fruition. It has been my pleasure to serve as editor of the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*. I sincerely appreciate everyone’s support.
Reference

One of These Things Is Not Like the Other: Art Education and the Symbolic Interaction Of Bodies and Self-images

James H. Rolling, Jr.

This article begins with the premise that self-imagery is constituted as a shape-shifting aggregate of symbolic systems that incorporates the human body itself as one of its representations. At intermittent points of the body’s embodiment of visual culture and tacit social experience, alternative representations accrete into varying symbolic systems, the multiple shapes a self-image may take over a lifetime. Given that social identity is derived from the interaction of various symbolic systems, how do some bodies and self-images come to be taken as that of identities incompatible with most others? In this exploration of the self-image and identity, the author reconsiders the purposes of art education in human development, especially when the self-image is given primacy over the objects we typically plan to make in the classroom.

Mr. Hooper’s Store

I have a vivid memory of watching “Sesame Street” segments when I was little, where Susan or Bob or Gordon or Mr. Hooper would sing a variation of the categorization song that includes the lines, “One of these things is not like the other,” or “One of these groups just doesn’t belong here.” This was in the early 1970s. I was being bussed to school in a White neighborhood, caught up in the nation’s movement to address the social injustice of the unequal quality of schooling in ghettoes like the one I grew up in, located in a Brooklyn neighborhood called Crown Heights. It was eerie listening to these songs, watching little White boys and girls and little Black boys and girls sitting together in Mr. Hooper’s store while no one addressed the giant blue furry elephant right there in the storefront with them. Even as a youngster, I was very much aware that most
people had long been quite comfortable with the idea that the kids sitting at Mr. Hooper's counter did not truly belong together. Even I knew that this was reason for the absence of White bodies on my narrow block in Brooklyn, and the absence of Black bodies anywhere near the wide lawns of homes in Sheepshead Bay. But this idea—the idea of different categories of bodies and of bodies that belong and do not belong—has generated many other stories worth noting.

Scientific and Narrative Traits

Science tells me that bodies have physical traits, distinguishing characteristics that can be named, labeled, or categorized, and which are reproduced and passed along genetically from one generation to the next. So when, during the last week of June, I was diagnosed by a physician as showing symptoms of the onset of diabetes mellitus, I was also asked whether either of my parents had diabetes. The answer was yes, my father, who died of diabetes-related complications at age 63.

Storytelling tells me that physical bodies also have narrative traits, distinguishing characteristics that can be named, labeled, or categorized, and which are also represented and passed along genetically from one generation to the next. For instance, in elementary school there was Thomas, seemingly always behind me on the schoolbus, who I allowed the minor social infraction of thumbing and rubbing the frizz of my hair, massaging the scalp of a quality of head clearly alien to his friendly white fingertips. This became mildly embarrassing in that I had never before truly embodied the representation of my hair texture as unlike the others. In high school, there was David, who pointed out that the skin on each of my knuckles, skin genetically thicker than his, was crinkled and scored in a manner that reminded him mostly of a reptile, a texture clearly alien to his friendly brown eyes. This was quite embarrassing in that I had never before embodied the representation that my skin texture
was not like the others. Embarrassment, or tacit bodily awareness, is an indication that social stigma has been embodied.

I have a story I must tell, one that tells something significant about art education and its place in the world, a story told most simply through personal narrative. First-person explanations—“the life story that people themselves tell about who they are, and why” (Carey, 2007, ¶ 1)—are a useful research tool, especially as researchers become more confident that “narrative themes are, as much as any other trait, driving factors in people’s behavior” (¶ 12). This story begins with the following question: As I reviewed the literature for my dissertation, an effort to generate new knowledge in the field of art education, why was I drawn to the work of scholars like Simi Linton (1998) and Erving Goffman (1963), scholars who are central to the field of Disability Studies, when neither the art education or disability studies fields are quite like the other?

Convergences, Negations, and the Interaction of Categories

All research communicates stories, or the paradigms that support those stories. The story I wish to tell today came to the surface of my consciousness through a series of convergences as I began to conceive this article. On the eve of my start in the role as chair of the Art Education Department, I had been asking myself why art education is so irrelevant to so many, and so misunderstood in so many circles. Frankly, even as I have dedicated my life to professing its significance to me, art education as taught by art education professionals was non-existent in my elementary and middle school years. Why isn’t art education included in the same category as reading, writing, and arithmetic as one of the essentials of a good education? Why isn’t art education like the others?

Why are students of color overwhelmingly pathologized as a special education population in public schools? Disability studies scholar David J. Connor (2008) cites the work of scholars within
the field of Disability Studies who do not view impairments as “medicalized deficits (physical, sensory, emotional, or intellectual),” but rather “as natural human differences categorized as ‘disabilities’ by a society reticent to reorganize through the removal of barriers and restrictions” to those who are different (Connor, 2008, p. 452, my italics). In the identification of students to receive special education services, “African-Americans are three times as likely to receive the label of mental retardation and twice as likely to be labeled emotionally disturbed in comparison to Whites” (Connor, 2008, p. 458).

I saw a glimpse of this phenomenon firsthand in the aftermath of a Sunday service as I observed the 6-year-old son of a friend at my church. The child’s parents were in the music ministry, his father a drummer. As was his habit, the young boy had climbed behind the drums after the service and was playing them intently, autodidactically focused on keeping exact rhythm with a couple of the musicians still fingerling the keyboard and the bass guitar. Having worked with children identified as gifted for many years at Hunter College Elementary School, I knew some of the signs and mentioned them casually to his parents. It turns out that they had suspected their son’s giftedness ever since he had begun speaking in full sentences unusually early in his development. Months later, I had a second conversation with his mother. She related her frustrations with acts of social determinism apparent in the school her son had recently been attending. The teachers there had already labeled her son, only in kindergarten, ‘a problem child’ who was in need of special attention because of all his kinetic energy, the kind of energy any percussionist is sure to exude from time to time. When the child’s mother countered that she believed her son was gifted, the incredulous retort was, “Well, who told you that?” The implication was that if the school’s professionals had not declared the boy to be gifted, it could not be so. This boy was one of the very few Black
children in a predominantly White school. Why aren’t Black boys included in the same category as those taken for granted as able-bodied, able-minded, and normal? Why aren’t Black boys and girls like the others?

Senator Joseph Biden, at the start of his campaign for the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, felt it appropriate to distinguish one of his competitors, Senator Barack Obama, as follows: “I mean, you got the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean and a nice-looking guy. I mean, that’s a storybook, man” (Tapper, 2007). Now I will admit here that I have long held insecurities about my personal ability to speak in the greater public arena, probably due to the invisibility in the media of other folks who looked like me addressing the “American” public. But there have always been articulate, bright, clean, and nice-looking leaders in Black communities. Why aren’t the many Black leaders from my neighborhood illuminated in the national and international media and included in the same category as those taken for granted as mainstream, articulate, bright, clean, nice-looking? Why aren’t Black men and women like the others?

I recently rented the movie “Miss Evers’ Boys,” a 1997 HBO film. It tells of a clinical study gone awry, the infamous Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male, which was conducted under the auspices of the U.S. Public Health Service from 1932 through 1972. In this 40 year study, the longest non-therapeutic scientific experiment on human beings in medical history, 600 African-American sharecroppers were studied in Macon County, Alabama—399 chronic syphilitics and a control group of 201 men without syphilis—under a ruse that deceived the participants into believing that were indeed being treated for what was known in the vernacular as “bad blood.” Placebo treatments, medical hyperbole, and promises of funeral benefits were all plied in the place of informed consent. Long after penicillin had become the standard and effective
treatment for syphilis, the men who were recruited as human guinea pigs during this effort to watch the natural progression of this fatal disease, lived and died without ever being informed that they were not being treated for anything at all. How could this take place? Easily—this study took place in an era when the lives of the Black men, women, and children, if valued at all, were certainly not valued the same as those who were White.

In fact, the prevailing definition was that of the utter abnormality of the descendants of slaves as was declaimed by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, founder of the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1868 for the manual training of colored people. Armstrong was of the opinion that his charges were mentally, morally, and materially destitute, each one burdened with the unfortunate affliction of a number of birth defects issuing forth in the form of "[h]is low ideas of life and duty, his weak conscience, his want of energy and thrift," and "his indolent, sensuous tropical blood" (Kliebard, 1999, p. 14). The long-prevailing prescription of an education appropriate for a Negro was explicated by John Dollard in his exposé of a Southern town in the 1930s where schools were used "to educate the Negro in order to fit him for place first as a slave and then as a caste man in society," an educational trajectory that would "prepare him for, but not beyond, the opportunities of lower-class status" (Kliebard, 1999, p. 224). These words and institutions and the ideas they represent have become a part of the layering of Black self-image. Why aren't the bodies of Black laborers included in the same category as those taken for granted as valuable, non-defective, and worth the investment of social capital? Why aren't Black bodies like the others?

I happened across a television interview with popular journalist and author Malcolm Gladwell (2005), author of the book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, in which he explores rapid cognition, "the sort of snap decision-making performed without
thinking about how one is thinking, faster and often more correctly than the logical part of the brain can manage” (Lasser, 2007, ¶ 2). In the course of the interview, Gladwell—who could pass as White in many circles even though one of his parents is Jamaican—related the phenomenon of snap judgments to how pejorative stereotypes are assigned, citing Harvard’s Implicit Association Test, and the fact that ever since he let his hair grow out into a prominent afro, he has been stopped by police while traveling about in what seem to be snap decisions by those authorities and certainly without just cause. Why isn’t Black hair like the others?

Finally, on a recent episode of the Oprah show a long-standing crisis in self-image and identity was revisited as Black children were asked to categorize their preferences and distastes for White baby dolls that don’t look like them and Black baby dolls that do in Kiri Davis’s eight-minute documentary, “A Girl Like Me.” One of several young ladies who were also interviewed in the video expresses near the end how “Everybody else in society is throwing their ideas and what they believe we should be at us [sic].” Why aren’t the self-images of Blacks included in the same category as those taken for granted as valuable, central to the popular culture, and worth opening up all media avenues and opportunities for Blacks to self-promote? Why aren’t Black self-images and self-esteem like the others?

**Identity as Reinterpretation**

The previous convergences are just starting points. Ultimately, I am interested in the intersectionality of all self-images in an Information Age, not just Black self-image. In a May 10, 2007, New York Times website multimedia presentation about a new exhibition at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in Harlem called “Stereotypes vs. Humantypes,” images featuring Blacks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were displayed revealing how widespread stereotyped and distorted representations of Blacks were
during that time period ("Fact vs. Fiction," 2007). But the exhibition also showcases a concurrent phenomenon that was almost invisible and is still for the most part unknown: images that sketched the undistorted, uncaricatured life of Blacks at home, in weddings, at play—images of common everyday life in opposition to multiple social and scientific discourses declaiming Black abnormality and pathology—images reiterated and reappearing in the old photos in shoeboxes, in the corners of cracked dresser drawers, in crumbling envelopes on closet shelves, in heavy attic trunks, in frames adorning faded wallpaper. What can we learn from this? If nothing else, I believe we can relearn the purpose of art education if we take a new look at the reinterpretation of African American identity that took place in the midst of centuries of visual cultural vilification, a perfect storm of imagery that told only of our ugliness and unacceptability in the world. This reinterpretation was worked through the arts surrounding the Harlem Renaissance as much as it was anyplace else (Harris, 2003; Willis, 2000).

All educators ought to celebrate any group’s ability to visibly reinterpret personal and social significance. What if the ranks of art educators were charged with developing the human ability to defy disparaging labels and expectations and to lead meaningful and transforming lives in spite of the persistent social will to stigmatize? What if art educators were to take up the charge of opening up curricular spaces for students to locate personal significance for themselves, along with the agency to change the signifiers they have thus far embodied? To paraphrase one of the catchphrases from the popular new television show *Heroes*, “Save the self-image, save the world.”

**Self-imagery as a Symbol System**

The conception of the self as an instrument of inquiry has birthed whole new branches of qualitative inquiry (Eisner, 1991).
However, the self is not a form in itself, but a shape-shifting arena of possibilities bounded and overwritten by a palimpsest of self-images making sense over and over again of our experience of the world. A reading of the self is complicated with arrays of diaphanous self-images, an archaeological layering of “verbal images” and “mental images.” As it signifies an aspect of self, a “verbal image” is a name; if a “word is an image of an idea, and an idea is an image of a thing” (Mitchell, 1986, p. 22), then a name is simply an image of a proposed identity, not dissimilar from a label, category, or stereotype, none of which are necessarily true or even apt. Yet once applied, a name, label, category, or stereotype becomes a part of the archaeology of self-imagery, a part of the emerging story.

A “mental image” of self is akin to the narrative of personal memory, images of the self held in mind that have been impressed on us by the experience of our selves as reflected back to us in our passage through the world (Mitchell, 1986, p. 22). To explain further, philosopher David Hume is cited as describing the remnants left after memory’s dynamic process of minimization both as “faint images” and “decayed sensation” (Mitchell, 1986, p. 23). Thus, a memory is a selective remnant of an experience, a motion picture dissolve, a glancing recollection of texture, an echo, a whiff of a scent, packed with dense, continuous meaning. Every memory is a symbol. Every self-image is in vertiginous alignment with a deeper archaeology of identity, that is to say, a multiformational arrangement of representations that is manifested in the visual culture, a construction that tells who you are like and who you are not like, hybridic at times, subliminal at times, always interactional, all images contesting for preeminence and position in the constitution of a larger story of identity, the story of who I am and of who we be.

While some may understand identity as an immutable text, I see identity as the gaps in the deterministic text, the possibilities that redress our certainties and our destinies, the parts of the story that
cannot be scripted because they are still being contested, because they have not yet been lived. For those who rail against inappropriate names and unwanted self-images, there is a danger and there is a hope. Identity tantalizingly presents itself intact and may then be immediately overwritten, either as an act of malicious or indifferent subjugation, or as an act of self-preservation. According to Julia Kristeva, "a text works by absorbing and destroying at the same time the other texts of the intertextual space" (cited in Marshall, 1992, p. 130). Identity can thus be understood as an ongoing interpretation, pertaining to whatever experience holds true for those situated within their particular context-boundedness (Eisner, 1991). In writing on the act of interpretation, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1976) suggests that there are multiple phenomena that, although not text, are analogous to text in that we treat them as the objects of our interpretation:

Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory—in one way or another, unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense. (p. 153)

Our self-images do not reconstitute facts about us. What is a fact? It is a thing that is incontestably the case. In the realm of law, a fact is the purported truth about a case as opposed to any interpretation of said facts. However, if you, like me, have ever had difficulty relating the facts about a particular situation, have you ever fully considered why that is? It is because you have not yet generated an interpretation of the interacting facts, events, and emotions surrounding that particular situation—you haven't yet formed it into a story. Our representations of the world we know and of what
we do aren’t based on facts—they are founded on our needs, on our desires, on our hopes, on our beliefs, on our desperation, on our shaping of some oasis of order out of the chaos. We are compelled to give life a shape. In other words, the facts that populate our histories are meaningless in and of themselves until someone renders those facts significant by interpreting them. A truth held dear always begins by sorting disparate facts into a re-cognizable relationship, a story we will be able to recall, remember, and relate to others. The truths we hold dear are, thus, interpretations. We go even further to make art and discourse and imagery of those interpretations by exaggerating the things we hold most significant, embellishing the things that mesmerize, distract, and hold our attention, heightening the saliences that texture our existence. Ironically, our facility at shaping variations of truth around the very same facts makes any interpretation of facts highly contestable.

Our self-images are variations in an ongoing and embodied and personal story; thus, they are malleable. Self-image, like memory, can be erased by time or modified as facts are forgotten or misremembered over time. Self-image can be contorted by falsehoods or accusations. Self-image can be invaded by trauma or brain lesion. Self-image can be altogether disconnected from factuality and be reinforced by fictional episodes or fantasies. Self-image can be recalled by alternative cues, and be remembered in emotional keys varying from the discordant to the melodious. For instance, on a day full of embarrassments that assault the mind and stresses that expose the body, self-imagery might represent itself with fits of visceral self-loathing. Yet, on a day when the mind and body are stroked with a sense of belonging, self-imagery will shape itself at rest in a harbor connecting it to all the trade routes on the social map. An individual’s archaeology of self-imagery is a story-in-progress. The story is intuitively told, proceeding “from everything we know and everything we are;” the story is improvised, and as with all improvisations, converges “on the moment from a
rich plurality of directions and sources” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 40).

**Symbolic Interaction**

So how do we as art educators “save the self-image?” How do we “save the world” from the contemporary crisis in self-image? Postmodernist assumptions view identity constructs as narrative admixtures spoken in polyphonous sign systems, “a multiplicity of ironic and conflicting interdependent voices that can only be understood contextually, ironically, relationally, and politically” (Slattery, 2001, p. 374). Does this really have anything to do with art education at all? What if I told you that my job description as an art educator has never been to teach students to make pretty pictures and things, or the history of pretty pictures and things, or how to perceive when a picture or thing is pretty, or how to persuade others of the prettiness of a picture or thing in words that are captivatingly pretty?

I submit that my job as an art educator is actually much simpler than this; it only has three moving parts. My job is first to open up curricular spaces where students can picture themselves in the world, no matter whether that picture is pretty or not, locating self-image along with the agency to reinterpret the signifiers they have thus far embodied; secondly, my job is to open up a space where students can picture a more just and refined world, critiquing the cultural stories we hold to be socially significant or insignificant and exercising their acquired agency to make changes along the way; thirdly, my job is to open up a space where students can practice and expand upon a repertoire of marks, movements, and modelings that will make visible the self-imagery and stories that they have rendered to be personally and socially significant, capturing the attention of others so that they too may see, share the vision, and find common meaning.

Michael Parsons (1992) cites Charles Taylor’s suggestion that
anything interpretable must be a text or text-analogue. Interpretable events are the stuff that constitute the aggregate site of identity. What we see, hear, and emotionally experience, becomes us. Identities then may be viewed as semiotic creations, the archaeology of which is expanded by each ensuing reinterpretation. Identities are signs. Umberto Eco (1976) writes that, “A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else” (p. 7).

Identity is a meta-symbol, a by-product of the symbolic systems of verbal and mental imagery by which we construct or re-construct our version of the world. Walter Truett Anderson (1997) claims that “personal identities would be hard to locate without the network of symbols within which we are defined and the internal monologue with which we continually remind ourselves who we think we are” (p. 263). As a meta-symbol composed of sub-archaeologies of self-imagery, an identity is a living text. Identities are also then intertextual. Brenda Marshall, citing a definition of intertextuality by Jacques Derrida, describes a system of interrelationships “between the psyche, society, [and] the world” (Marshall, 1992, p. 122).

In the field of sociology, the term symbolic interactionism refers to “the theory that the meaning of symbols is determined through the course of human interaction” ("Symbolic interactionism," 2007, ¶ 1). According to a Wikipedia article, Herbert Blumer (1969) set forth the major tenets of symbolic interactionism as follows:

1. “Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them”
2. “The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows”
3. “These meanings are handled in, and, modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters”

With the interaction of symbolic systems in mind, reclaiming the relevance of art education necessarily involves a rethinking of
If we rethink art education, we must also rethink our approach to the objectives of the art education curriculum. Focusing for a moment on my job description to open up curricular spaces where students can picture themselves as critical agents in the world, I would argue that traditional art educational curriculum planning clogs up the spaces to extend and deepen self-imagery with its jump-cut, object-centered focus—make a little bit of pottery, then a few prints, then some observational drawings, then a painting or two, with a little bit of jewelry making or some digital photography, if we can squeeze it in. There is little attempt to facilitate the construction of extended personal narratives as rendered by our students, through curricular sequences that engender new self-imagery and new installments in the continuum of our collective story.

If “human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them,” why not allow students to work in the media they hold most significant, elaborating on the subjects they identify as being most significant to them irrespective of our professional teacherly desires? Educators need only to mark out the widest possible thematic parameters and allow students to find their way to the specificity they desire. Youngsters have no difficulty finding the stories they want to tell or re-tell; all we need to do is give them the permission to fill in the gaps of their choice. The major adjustment for educators is to no longer think in terms of class projects, but rather in terms of individual projects. This will be more work for us in some ways and less work in other senses as the individuals in our classrooms and studios are given the license to interact with each other and with us as independent agents on their projects, in keeping with Blumer’s (1969) assertion that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.

In Jane Gooding-Brown’s (2000) examination of the social construction of self and difference, and the negotiation of established
interpretations as an agency for change, she argues that a disruptive model of interpretation can initiate incursions that reposition story values. Robert McKee (1997) defines a story’s values as the “qualities of human experience that may shift from positive to negative, or negative to positive, from one moment to the next” (p. 34). One could say that the great efficiency of disruptive discursive repositioning is the ability to alter a story not by attaching an amendment to the story, but rather by infiltrating the story sequence and flipping the polarity, so to speak, of definitive events already ensconced in the narrative. The authorities have no defense against it. It is through the agency to alternate the currents of their lives that the meanings most significant to our students are “handled,” “modified,” and reinterpreted. Agency is conceived here not as the “freedom to do whatever the subject wills but rather freedom to constitute oneself in an unexpected manner—to decode and recode one’s identity (Stinson, 2004, p. 57).

Our bodies and bodies of knowledge are evidentiary. They are documentary. We position these bodies to tell stories—to tell histories, sometimes slightly false, sometimes barely true, but always significant enough to marshal our attention. Some wield the power to trap bodies in names, labels, categories, or stereotypes. Sometimes we must reposition our bodies to save our lives and liberate our self-images. Somehow, in the years succeeding the great Harlem Renaissance literary reinterpretation designated as ‘the New Negro,’ the old broken, whipped and degraded Negro body was also reinterpreted as a document of strength and beauty, yet no less Black! These were reinterpretations that altered the visual culture of “America,” connoting humanity rather than monstrosity.

In the music video from the 2001 song “Who We Be,” rap star DMX questions whether or not the dominant culture really knows who he, or any African American for that matter, really is. At several points in the video, brilliantly directed by Korean American Joseph Kahn, the rapper’s body is digitally recoded, his image repositioning
itself, a floating signifier interacting throughout social history, caught up in the visual cultural drama of “America’s” most significant events and the rapper’s most salient surroundings, events that, in truth, are already subsumed within the archaeology of DMX’s self-imagery.

Ultimately, DMX appears to conclude that who he is is not at all bound up in difference, but that he could be just as well represented by any one of the number of children, each of unspecified ethnic origin, who identify themselves in his stead in the closing seconds of the video. Likewise, each of those children could be just as well represented by the final image of DMX himself in the concluding frame; DMX and the children are intersectionalities, alternating currents for one another’s self-image. DMX cannot be held behind prison bars that tell him he is not like the others.

Art educators, take note: the question, “Who am I?” posed by an inquiring and creative mind is likely the most powerful thing we have going for us as we decide who we be as teaching professionals in the 21st century.
References


The Pedagopticon: Other Eyes in the 21st Century Classroom²

Robert W. Sweeny

The Pedagopticon is a revolutionary new technology that allows educators to do away with outdated methods of discipline and punishment. Fusing traditional optical equipment (eye, camera lens) with the latest in high-tech gear (digital camera, weblinked connectivity), the ‘Pedagopticon’ is the future of teaching. It was once said that seasoned teachers had ‘eyes in the back of their head.’ Well, the scientists at ‘technologyisthedevil’ have taken this adage and made it real. Now, you can have eyes everywhere! No corner of your classroom is out of your gaze. The ‘Pedagopticon’ offers a full 360 degrees of monitoring, all viewed with ease on the patented teacher ‘pod-eye-um’. No more tedious scanning for hands eager to complete your thought! No more talk of ‘proximity’ or ‘engagement.’ With the “Pedagopticon,” you just sit back and let the images come to you. Pedagopticon: We put the “eyes” in instruction!

² This piece is satire; although the references point to the fact that, while the technologies described are fantasy, the mechanisms behind them are all too real. The author would like to thank the organizers of the 2004 New Forms Festival, Vancouver, BC, for the opportunity to perform this paper as part of the conference.
Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen, to the future. The future of technology, of education, of sight. What you will see in this informational article, or infarticle, is the very latest in developing technology, a device that borrows from the past in order to act upon the future, before it happens. The Pedagopticon.
The Peda-what, you may ask? The *Pedagogopticon!* Part pedagogue, part Panopticon. The very latest in cyborg pedagogy, the *Pedagogopticon* fuses the control that is inherent to teaching with cutting edge optical equipment, creating situations in which participation is guaranteed, disruptions are a thing of the past, and students are efficiently yet gently coerced into learning.

The *Pedagogopticon* is the result of countless hours of research in laboratory environments, K-12 public school systems and university classrooms. It represents the combination of vanguard academic theory and time tested practice. In order to understand the potential for this device to alter the very face of education as we know it, I must first present a brief overview of relevant sight-based practices in the fields of education and surveillance.


4 Art educators Charles Garoian and Yvonne Gaudelius (2001) have proposed the idea of a ‘cyborg pedagogy’ that might address and critique the intersections that are more and more common in contemporary societies. Central to this form of pedagogy is the inherent performativity of education and the value of performance artists such as Stelarc and Guillermo-Gomez Pena who critique the cultural and social relationships between technologies and bodies. Garoian, C., & Gaudelius, Y. (2001). *Cyborg pedagogy: Performing resistance in a digital age.* Studies in Art Education, 42(4), 333-347.
Surveillance and Education: A View from Above

Surveillance has taken on a negative ring in recent times. The term, which derives from the French *sur*, meaning 'over,' and *veiller*, or 'to watch,' actually has positive connotations. The protective gaze of a parent over his or her child, the birds-eye view that allows the air traveler a majestic new perspective of the countryside; surveillance is not inherently bad.

The work of opportunist groups such as the American Civic Liberties Union (ACLU) has presented a skewed view of surveillance as representing an imposition on civil liberties. The surveillance cameras that are increasingly found in public areas worldwide are simply the by-product of the global technology boom; a boom that benefits everyone! More cameras mean more money. In fact, many believe that the cameras effectively deter crime, making those under surveillance safer. This is a safety that one can feel, walking down the crowded sidewalk in New York or Chicago, although one rarely is aware that they are being watched.

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5 The recent ACLU report on “Combating the Surveillance-Industrial Complex” can be found at: http://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree.cfm?ID=16224&c=207

6 As of 1999, The borough of Manhattan in New York City had over 2397 surveillance cameras in operation in public areas (source: http://www.mediaeater.com/cameras/overview.html). These cameras have been documented by the NY ACLU, as well as by The Surveillance Camera Players (http://www.notbored.org/the-scp.html).

A group called the ‘Institute for Applied Autonomy’ has made the location of each of these cameras public. Their ‘i-See’ project allows individuals to map paths of least surveillance through the city (http://www.appliedautonomy.com/isee.html)

In the UK, the massive boom in public surveillance cameras in the 1990’s has proven that the technologies are effective crime deterrents. Adding to this preventative aspect is the accompanying placards that note the presence of the cameras. Walking through the crowded streets of London, the signs exude a calming effect. They become mantra-like: “You are being watched.” “This area under surveillance.” The ever watchful eye of the surveillance camera is merely extensions of a mother’s loving arms, bringing those in her gaze closer to her protective bosom.

This is the love that is projected over the grid-like arrangements of desk/chair combo units in public school classrooms the world over. This is a love, in the form of the all-seeing eye, that is questioned by civil libertarians and unruly youngsters alike. Through the advanced technology available to us in these halcyon days of digital bliss, this love can now completely rain over each and every student, beams of light-love projecting from high-power spotlights, reflecting images of purity and uniform docility, captured by high resolution lenses, beamed wirelessly to the command console of the “Pedagopticon.” The days of educational bliss are ahead of us, made possible by a simple combination of lens, wire, human, and computer chip. We have the father of surveillance and punishment to thank for this powerful gift: the eminent Michel Foucault.

The Panopticon: Metaphor, Myth, or Motherly Love

When Michel Foucault described the relationship between teaching and surveillance in his landmark self-help book Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1972), he was speaking

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7 As of 2001, the UK has an estimated 2.5 million surveillance cameras in operation. While commonly described as being a deterrent for crime, the general crime rate in the UK rose by 4.3 percent over the same time period. Rosen, J. (2001). A watchful state. Retrieved August 2007, from http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/07/magazine/07SURVEILLANCE.html
metaphorically. Schools are not prisons, and teachers are not guards. U.S. schools are increasingly using barred windows and metal detectors to protect those inside, not to prevent their escape.

While these advances are helpful, and profitable, primarily for industrial manufacturers, educational systems are finally getting with the program, replacing cumbersome metal detectors and aesthetically distasteful steel bars with advanced technologies. Closed Circuit Surveillance camera systems have been in operation for some time in many school districts. However, in the 21st century, schools are beginning to change with the times. The Biloxi, Mississippi, school system stands as a pioneering example of the willingness for tax dollars to be put towards something besides the old fashioned textbooks and instructional materials. School officials, in August 2003, installed surveillance cameras in every classroom in the district, at the cost of a mere two million dollars, raised from funds donated by local casinos. Bars and metal detectors out, cameras (and legalized gambling), in!

“A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency” (Foucault, 1977, p. 176). Foucault uses the examples of schools, hospitals, and military training facilities as well as prisons to describe the extensiveness of panoptic forms of self-control within primarily industrialized societies. It is important for educators to consider the connections between these aspects of society, particularly in regard to the emphasis upon regimentation and hierarchy that is prevalent in U.S. schools.


The move towards both disembodiment and luminosity that the Panopticon represents is described by Gilles Deleuze (1980) in his book on Foucault: “Prison, for its part, is concerned with whatever is visible: not only does it wish to display the crime and the criminal[,] but in itself it constitutes a visibility[,] it is a system of light before being a figure of stone, and is defined by ‘Panopticism’” (p. 32). Deleuze, G. (1988). Foucault. (S. Hand, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1986)
While the Biloxi surveillance system is a step in the right direction, it does not put the power of the digital gaze in the hands (or eyesockets) of the educator. It also operates in a subtle manner, the ceiling mounted cameras blending in with the PA monitor and fluorescent lighting, all meshing together to create efficient networks of control. However, the gamblers of Biloxi deserve to see their tax dollars at work. It is the need for an affordable yet comprehensive form of surveillance that has brought us the Pedagopticon.

**The Pedagopticon: The Eyes Have IT**

Based upon the consumer demand for high-tech gadgets, as well as the general acceptance of all things futuristic by contemporary youth, the scientists at TechDevil have developed a wearable device that allows for complete control in the classroom, while appearing stylish and 'hip.' The Panopticon is a lightweight headset made of space age materials that incorporates two webcams and two high powered spotlights, providing 360° of unobstructed vision.

The Pedagopticon allows educators to do away with outdated methods of discipline. No more tedious scanning for hands eager to complete your thought! No more talk of 'proximity control' or 'engagement.' With the Pedagopticon, there is no doubt who is in control. It's you, or more accurately, you and the Pedagopticon. Students will begin to see you and the Pedagopticon as one and the same. In fact, you might even find that your own eyes are less effective. Tests show that many educators gradually use their eyes less

This tendency can also be seen in the development of consumer digital technologies -- slimmer, lighter laptops, smaller cellphones -- negotiating the gray area between invisibility and brand recognition. Cell phones are now Bluetooth-connected earpieces lodged inside the ear. This embodiment is similar to the incorporation that Foucault describes, although this process of increased invisibility is behavioral rather than physical -- the technologies of surveillance begin to impose limitations on behavior through self-limitation rather than physical constraint from outside.
and less – the powerful lenses of the Pedagopticon take over, allowing many overworked teachers to catch up on much needed sleep.

No more futile tactics that keep students from participating. No more avoiding eye contact to remain silent during ‘question and answer’ sessions. With the Pedagopticon, all eyes are on you – literally! Best of all, the Pedagopticon merely extends the forms of visual control already in use in most classrooms. The prison space of the Panopticon becomes the loving environment in which every student is seen, every comment is heard (and documented), and every child is wrapped in the loving arms of an all-seeing eye.

Putting the ‘Eyes’ in Instruction

The Pedagopticon uses the forms of vision that are already in operation in the classroom, types of classroom management and control that are time tested. These ‘ways of seeing’ rely upon the physical arrangement of the classroom, as well as the ability for educators to see what will happen next.

Effective teachers use their power of sight to monitor individuals, preventing errant behavior and quickly acting to eliminate those in practice. The primary techniques observed by our scientists in laboratory situations are scanning, isolating, and comprehensive views. While the effective teacher uses these techniques in conjunction with one another, it has been impossible for anyone to use them simultaneously – until now!

The Pedagopticon simultaneously scans the classroom, isolates individual students, and provides a comprehensive overview of the classroom and its surroundings. The built in monitor displays these three views, allowing the educator to do the work of three traditional teachers. Teachers wield more power, school boards get three times the work, and students think the ‘space-age’ contraption is cool! An added bonus – recent studies find that many consumers feel safer in spaces equipped with surveillance technology. Everyone wins!

Educators have always relied upon the physical structure of their classroom to reinforce proper behavior. Desks are typically arranged in a grid, allowing for names to be easily learned, seating charts to be efficiently created, and to limit ‘blind spots’ – spaces where reluctant or unprepared children might hide.

12 In *The American School 1642-2000*, Joel Spring (2001) describes the tension between control and flexibility in classroom spaces in the early portion of the 20th century. The progressive education movement led by John Dewey evolved into a variety of forms including the push in the 1970’s for ‘open classrooms.’ These informal, student centered spaces were a response to the influence of behaviorist B.F. Skinner, who proposed that schools could be scientifically engineered to function optimally through reinforcements – both positive and negative – from management: teachers. For a discussion
The Pedagopticon builds upon the uniformity of the physical classroom space, allowing educators to easily and quickly see irregular behavior. These behaviors are recorded and digitally catalogued, using the Pedagopticon “Ped-a-pro” software, making unwanted behaviors such as note passing or nose picking a thing of the past. With the addition of the optional night-vision lens, you can even control those situations that have traditionally been rife with disturbances: the viewing of filmstrips or slide projections in darkened spaces. Spit-wads, make out sessions, or simple snoozing? How twentieth-century!

Effective teachers have traditionally used proximity control to reinforce appropriate behavior through nonverbal means. With the Pedagopticon, space is a thing of the past. Individual cameras can isolate certain behaviors from a distance, eliminating unnecessary movement. Ah, the ease of control and organization, all from the comfort of a fixed position in front of the class.

With the addition of the (optional) Pedagopticon “Pod-Eye-Um,” educators can connect the power of the Pedagopticon to a systemwide database, allowing for effortless access of individual student records and family histories made possible by the Total Information Act of 2001, in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security and the USA PATRIOT Act.  

13 The USA PATRIOT Act, signed into law by George W. Bush on October 26, 2001, gives law enforcement authorities expanded access to surveillance procedures and search and seizure techniques, specifically impacting on-line activities (http://www.epic.org/privacy/terrorism/usapatriot/). Bush’s position on the impact of developing technologies and civil liberties is quite clear: “The gravest danger our Nation faces lies at the crossroads of radicalism and technology.” George W. Bush, National Security Council Address, September 17, 2002 (http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nssintro.html)
The *Pedagopticon* is a teaching tool that is sure to please everyone involved in education, making sure that no child is left behind.\(^{14}\)

**See the Future Before the Future Sees You!**

The future is surely in sight, with the *Pedagopticon*. The latest in the bountiful marriage between military technology and industrial organization, the *Pedagopticon* not only makes educational sense – it makes cents. Hundreds of thousands of cents, to be exact, cents that go straight to our research team, and our fine educational partners at Halliburton. The fun, and the funds, are guaranteed to keep coming.\(^{15}\) Think about it – a regimented student body makes for a diligent workforce and dutiful armed services. The *Pedagopticon* restores order to a society that has lost its way. And, best of all, it does so through the educational system that so many have given up on.

The 2004 arrest of Steve Kurtz, Associate Professor of Art at the University of Buffalo (NY) and member of Critical Art Ensemble, stands as a test to the implications of the USA PATRIOT Act in regards to both artistic and educational practices (see [http://www.caedefensefund.org/](http://www.caedefensefund.org/) for a complete account of this case).

14 NCLB, or No Child Left Behind, is the comprehensive plan for educational reform introduced by the Bush Administration on January 8, 2002 ([http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb](http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb)). It emphasizes accountability of individual schools, measured by elaborate standardized tests. Many have criticized the plan for requiring that school districts adopt new costly testing procedures without also providing appropriate funding, for emphasizing reading and mathematics at the expense of subjects such as art, and for aligning school reform with neoliberal political and economic policies. (See the *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), Special Issue on No Child Left Behind, September 2007, for a comprehensive critique of NCLB).

When school districts across the United States were resisting the NCLB Act, with the approval of the National Education Association, then-Secretary of Education Rod Paige called the NEA a "terrorist organization" in February 2004. His quick apology did little to appease the 2.7 million member group, who called for his removal.

15 "Sometimes willingly, sometimes not, the private sector is playing a key role in the push toward a frightening new surveillance society." Jay Stanley, Communications Director of the ACLU's Technology and Liberty Program ([http://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree.cfm?ID=16224&c=207](http://www.aclu.org/SafeandFree/SafeandFree.cfm?ID=16224&c=207)).
Close your eyes. Imagine a time when every aspect of your life was private, your every move was not recorded. Open your eyes, and see the future – Before the future sees you! *Pedagogicon.*
Other(wise): The Myth of Wikipedia

Melanie L. Buffington

This article explores the theme of Other(wise) as it relates to Web 2.0 and newer forms of creating knowledge. Through a discussion of Web 2.0, wikis, and Wikipedia, I explore newer ways of thinking about a text. Wikis represent modern texts and require different approaches than traditional texts. As a field, we need to become active on Wikipedia to develop our presence in ways that represent the complexities of our field.

I was so confused. Who was this person and why was he emailing me about what my class did on Wikipedia the previous night? As I read more emails, it became clear that something had happened between 8pm the night before when my class ended, and 9am the next morning, when I was back in my office logging on to my computer. I tried going back to the Wikipedia page that my students worked on the night before, but it was gone. After a bit more digging, I found that the entire Wikipedia page for my university had been shut down for a month because of what my students and I did. The Wikipedia moderator who shut it down stated that, “… the violations that I saw were quite serious and I’m very concerned that a professor appears to have made a class assignment out of violating Wikipedia policies.”

I sat in my chair stunned for a few minutes. As a non-tenured professor in my first year at my university, I was a bit terrified and wondered if anyone else at the university was aware of what we did and that the university’s entire Wikipedia page was shut down. And,
what was it that my students and I did that was so wrong? Wikipedia is all user-generated content, and we were a group of users who generated content. Because our previous attempt with a wiki (not Wikipedia) was not particularly successful, I brainstormed with another professor and we came up with the idea of having students make a Wikipedia page together about something they knew about—our department. It seemed to go well in class with students adding pertinent information, altering others' posts, changing, rethinking, and editing all at once. If we violated Wikipedia policies, why was it necessary to shut down the entire university's page?

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to argue for the importance of Web 2.0 in Art Education. At the same time, I offer a cautionary tale about how the democratic ideas of Web 2.0 may not always be manifested in the actual instances of its use. In this article, I interpret the journal theme “Other(wise)” as meaning other ways of being wise or alternative approaches to generating knowledge. The technologies of Web 2.0 represent a dramatic change in who creates content for the Web, how the content is created, whose ideas are represented, and who controls these ideas once they are released on the Web. Thus, the technologies of Web 2.0 bring other ways of being wise to everyone who has Web access. Tim Berners-Lee, who developed the first Mosaic Web browser in 1993, indicated his hope was to make the Web a place of collaboration where people could come together to read, write, and discuss (Carvin, 2005). Though this did not happen with the earliest iterations of the Web, it is now a reality with the development of Web 2.0.

After describing Web 2.0, wikis, and Wikipedia, I argue for the importance of these technologies to the field of Art Education.

1 Web 2.0 is also called the “Read/Write Web” or the “open source Web” (Maloney, 2007). For the purpose of this article, I use the term Web 2.0 exclusively.
Following this, I explore some of the complexities associated with Wikipedia and the ability of users to create content. Throughout this article, I offer relevant bits of my experience with Wikipedia and conclude with a call for art educators to begin creating knowledge about our field on Wikipedia.

As we become more technologically savvy as a culture, it is important that education reflects larger societal trends. The students of today are what Prensky (2001) termed “digital natives.” He explains how their first instinct is to go to the Web for information and many of them may not recall life without the Web. Expanding this metaphor, he refers to those of us who are older as “digital immigrants.” For us, using the Web will always be akin to speaking a second language and we will retain our accents, whereas our students are native speakers of this language. The “digital natives” may use the Web for many aspects of their lives, but “digital immigrants” tend to use it for specific finite purposes. Increasingly, our students are “digital natives” and their ideas about knowledge, research, and learning are shaped by the roles that these technologies play in their lives. Prensky (2001) stated that, “... the single biggest problem facing education today is that our Digital Immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age), are struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language” (p. 2). One part of this new language is Web 2.0.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is the general name given to a group of newer technologies that are usually freely available through the Web to anyone with Internet access (O’Reilley, 2005). The term, “Web 2.0,” is generally believed to have originated from the O’Reilley publishing group. Web 2.0 is different from the rest of the Web because the uses of these technologies are not pre-determined by the creators of the software. The concept of Web 2.0 is somewhat nebulous; thus,
rather than attempt to create a definition, I will describe some of the aspects that it allows. Through Web 2.0, users are trusted to generate content, users are invited to play with the technologies, technologies are continually in a beta state with frequent updates, users are invited to remix both the content and the software, and user experimentation and hacking are encouraged.

Through Web 2.0, the Web changes from a static place, where users go to read content, to a dynamic platform that promotes a rich user experience on which users create content, generate new ideas, hack other users' ideas and programs, rate content, etc. The concept of Web 2.0 uses the idea of the collective intelligence of its users rather than only relying on the intelligence of software developers (O'Reilly, 2005). Though there are many different technologies that are part of Web 2.0, specific names include wikis (Wikipedia), blogs (Blogger, Word Press, Type Pad), mind mapping (freemind), podcasts, social networking sites (Ning, LinkedIn, MySpace, Facebook, Friendster), RSS feeds, and many others. Until these tools were widely available, posting information on the Web required specific knowledge and technical expertise. Now, users create personal Web pages through facebook in 10-15 minutes. Additionally, MySpace, YouTube, Blogger, Flikr, and other sites not only allow users to create content, but to post it also for free on the company's server. The free availability of server space removes yet another barrier between potential contributors of knowledge and their ability to communicate it to a wider audience.

Thus, the emergence of Web 2.0 allows a larger number of people to have access to create and disseminate content on the Web, represents a significant change from the earlier model of publishing information on the Web, and moves us closer to Tim Berners-Lee's vision of users being able to collaborate through the Web.

Previously, the way that content was created for the Web closely mirrored the publishing industry's paradigm (Liu, 2006).
Usually, an author wrote the content, an editor altered it, and it was then posted on a static Web site. The fact that there are now many more authors and editors constitutes a dramatic shift in terms of the content that is available on the Web. Additionally, though the authors and editors may be working together, they may not know each other and may hold divergent views. Increasingly, advocates of Web 2.0 make suggestions for how these technologies can and should be used within education (Achterman, 2006; Alexander, 2006; Freedman, 2006; Hastings, 2007; Huffman, 2006; Maloney, 2007; Richardson, 2006; Warlick, 2006). Allowing students to use these tools to create and disseminate knowledge may represent an important direction for education, and art education in particular.

Because of its emphasis on creating content, Web 2.0 is particularly well suited for the field of art education. Though we often discuss creating in terms of traditional art objects, it may be useful for our field to extend the concept of “creation” to include what students may make or do through a blog, wiki, or podcast. Through these tools students may be able to keep a portfolio, reflect upon their artmaking, learn about the artistic process, and work in time-based media. Even though the tools of Web 2.0 offer the promise of user-generated content, a democratization of the Web, and unparalleled access to knowledge, it is important to examine these claims critically.

**Wikis**

As part of the Web 2.0 movement, wikis certainly present a dramatic paradigm shift in terms of how knowledge is created and disseminated. Developed in 1995 by Ward Cunningham, wiki is the name of a technology that runs many Web sites, including Wikipedia. The name “wiki” comes from the Hawaiian word for “quick,” and Cunningham explains it as an “alliterative substitute for quick,” thereby naming these pages quick web (Cunningham,
Wiki pages are Web pages that can be edited by anyone who chooses to visit the site, or if the site is password protected, anyone who has access. The concept of a wiki is fundamentally different from traditional Web sites in which someone creates the content and it is posted for others to view. Though they may email suggestions or comments to the web master, visitors to the site may not actually contribute content or change existing content. With a wiki, one person, or a group of people, create the content and all the visitors to the site are not just consumers of the content, they can also create content, edit the existing content, or delete content. This alteration of content happens in real time and, content may change quickly. Wikipedia is the best-known example of a wiki, and it strives to be a freely available, neutral online encyclopedia. Founded in 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, Wikipedia now contains more than 2.8 million articles in 200 languages and averaged about 65 million hits per month during the early part of 2009 (Wikipedia, 2009).

Wikipedia

The astronomical growth of Wikipedia shows that users embrace the technology of a wiki and utilize it frequently. On Wikipedia, knowledge is created collaboratively by users around the world and this empowers more people as potentially being able to tell their stories, contribute their knowledge, and shape the world of media in which we live. Users may register, if they choose, with Wikipedia. However, they may still participate even if they do not register. Users can edit content on existing pages, add new pages, and add links between and among pages. Wikipedia embodies much of what Barthes (1977) described in The Death of the Author. Because

2 The person primarily responsible for Wikipedia is somewhat in dispute. Jimmy Wales claims to be; but, there is other evidence that Larry Sanger also played an instrumental role. Hansen (2005) points out that Wales edited his own biography on Wikipedia 18 times and changed references to Sanger’s contributions.
Wikipedia is both anonymous and collaborative, there is no author and no attributions are made on the main pages, though it is possible to view the history of a page and see the author's username, if s/he is a registered user. As such, Wikipedia is a modern text, as Barthes explained and readers are not able to intuit the meaning of the text from the identity of the author or from the context. Because there are multiple scriptors, the meaning comes to reside within the reader. However, this raises other issues. Since the information on Wikipedia may change, it is inherently different from traditional printed writing. Like a traditional text, readers of Wikipedia pages may move back and forth between pages and from the footnotes to the text. Unlike a traditional text, new ideas may appear and other ideas may disappear as the reader engages with the text. Thus, it is not a fixed text and this may also be a feature of a modern text. This is further complicated by Wikipedia's claim to be a neutral source of knowledge. Wikipedia is certainly different from past texts not only because of its ever-changing nature, but also because attributions of the authorship are not apparent, and the newest versions are immediately available worldwide. These distinguishing characteristics are not inherently positive or negative, they simply represent differences between the text of Wikipedia and past texts.

On the main page of Wikipedia, users are encouraged by the following, "Don't be afraid to edit — anyone can edit almost any page, and we encourage you to be bold! Find something that can be improved, whether content, grammar or formatting, and make it better." (Wikipedia, 2007b). This type of language sets up Wikipedia as a welcoming place that wants users to be a part of the community. After registering as a user, I found the following on my user page, "Be bold in editing pages and don't let others scare you off!" (//en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_talk:). This gave me the idea that Wikipedia welcomed my thoughts and knowledge.

Yet, after my students and I collaborated and wrote about the
Art Education Department, our motives were called into question. As I read the numerous emails and comments on my Wikipedia talk page that informed me of the Wikipedia policies, that my students and I violated, I was stunned. Among these policies is the Conflict of Interest policy. According to Wikipedia, “A Wikipedia conflict of interest (COI) is an incompatibility between the purpose of Wikipedia to produce a neutral, verifiable encyclopedia, and the purposes of an individual editor” (Wikipedia, 2007a). In my mind, this sets up a dichotomy between an editor who is neutral and an editor with a purpose. Additionally, the statement is based on the premise that knowledge is and can be neutral and raises issues about an individual and about groups. Because Wikipedia claims to be a neutral source of information, the concept of a conflict of interest becomes even more important. Though the page explains that merely having knowledge of a subject is not inherently a conflict of interest, there are surely some gray areas.

Why were our Wikipedia posts about our Department deemed to be conflicts of interest? We wrote verifiable information about the Department. We included information about the faculty, described initiatives in the Department, articulated ongoing research, and described student life. Since we are part of a nationally ranked School of the Arts (that did not have its own Wikipedia page), don’t we have a place on Wikipedia?

As a contributor to Wikipedia, what I find dangerous are the twin myths of neutrality and democracy that Wikipedia promotes. Though the premise of Wikipedia promotes other ways of being wise and constructing knowledge, its function as a wiki inherently raises issues. In 2006, Wikipedia banned the IP addresses from computers on Capitol Hill (Seabrook & Chadwick, 2006) because staffers were posting too much laudatory information about the politicians for whom they worked. More recently, Virgil Griffith, a graduate student, wrote a program entitled Wikipedia Scanner that
tracks the IP address of the computers that individuals use to make entries on Wikipedia. Through this tracking system, he discovered many instances of previously unknown conflicts of interest including someone from Dow Chemical Company deleting information about the company's involvement in environmental disasters, someone from Wal-Mart positively enhancing information about employee pay, and an employee of Diebold, manufacturer of voting machines, eliminating information about concerns over the reliability of the machines (NPR, 2007). These recent issues, and the widely publicized case of erroneous and libelous information posted on John Siegenthaler's Wikipedia page that alluded to an implication in the assassinations of John and Robert Kennedy, raise significant issues about how we teach our students to use Wikipedia (Siegenthaler, 2005).

One comment from a Wikipedia moderator encouraged my students and I not to write about the department of Art Education, but to write about content in the field. This prompted me to continue my search on Wikipedia, and I quickly located the pages for "Art Education," "Visual Culture," and "Qualitative Research." On each of these pages, there is information that is outdated, reflects the biases of the writers, and is not necessarily in the mainstream of art education. For instance on the "Art Education" page, there is no mention of visual culture (other than a link to the visual culture page that I created). The "History of Art Education" section, that focuses on the United States, does not include any information about the beginnings of our field through the Massachusetts Drawing Act. Major movements in our field including common school art, Jane Addams and Hull House, the Owatonna radio project, progressive education, and many others are absent. References to important art educators including Manuel Barkan, Dorothy Dunn, and Eugene Grisby are also absent. There are also no references to current issues including comprehensive art education, the inclusion of technology
in art education, multicultural art education, choice-based art education, service-learning, and critical thinking. Until recently, there was a section on the Art Education Wikipedia page that featured a list of 50 "... famous world contributors to art education academic theory" (Wikipedia, 2009). This list contained only five women and did not reflect a contemporary and comprehensive view of our field. During one of my 2009 NAEA presentations, I showed this page and commented about it. Within 24 hours, the list was removed.3

The idea that writing about my Department constituted a Conflict of Interest, but writing about topics in the field did not constitute a conflict raised numerous issues for me. The pages of the journal of Art Education contain arguments, letters to the editor, and counterarguments about many topics, notably visual culture. All of these articles and letters promote particular viewpoints. Surely, the contributors to Wikipedia, also, have viewpoints that their entries and edits reflect. It is this illusion of neutrality that Wikipedia promotes that I think is dangerous. Instead of trying to claim that knowledge can be neutral, or forbidding our students from using Wikipedia, we need to find another way to deal with these issues. As Wikipedia presents a new type of text, we need to learn new ways of understanding it. Certainly, as an encyclopedia, it is not fundamentally different from other encyclopedias and is not meant to be a scholarly source. However, when our students, “digital natives,” conduct research, their instinct is to turn to the Internet, and they find Wikipedia sites. Instead of simply banning these tools, I believe that we need to investigate ways to embrace tools of Web 2.0, use them in meaningful ways, and educate ourselves and our students about various ways to contribute to and use them. Though I certainly understand educators’ concerns about embracing Wikipedia, using it may provide opportunity to teach students (and

3 However, it can still be viewed on the Wikipedia history page for Art Education http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Art_education&diff=prev&oldid=284466441
ourselves) critical thinking skills that we can use to evaluate different types of texts. Thus, we need to learn how to evaluate Web 2.0 texts, how to understand the perspective of the person writing the article (or the people writing the Wikipedia entry), and how to consider conflicting ideas.

Conclusions

Often, when I conduct a Google search, a Wikipedia hit is the first one on the list. Because of this, it is extremely important that we, as a field, pay attention to how we are represented (or not represented) on Wikipedia. I am far from the first to notice that the content on Wikipedia, that is labeled neutral, actually contains the perspectives of the authors. However, with Wikipedia, unlike past media, we as a field can begin to shape the information that is contained on this information source. As of late May 2009, when I Google the term “visual culture,” the Wikipedia page is the first hit. The only information on this page, about art education, relates to a graduate program that offers a degree in art education and visual culture. Thus, I close with a call to my colleagues in public schools, universities, museums, and arts organizations to become active on Wikipedia, to edit the pages on art, art education, visual culture, service-learning, social justice, interdisciplinary curriculum, museum education, Web 2.0, etc. There are many ways that art educators could involve their students in creating knowledge on Wikipedia. For an assignment in a history of art education class, students could write about different movements in the history of art education, post them on Wikipedia, and then edit (on Wikipedia) the sections that their classmates created. Additionally, the depth and breadth of the contributions of women and people of color to the field of art education are largely absent from the Art Education Wikipedia page, in its current state. This may be something that the various caucuses within NAEA could address to ensure that the wide range
of ideas about art education and the important contributions of a variety of art educators are represented in this public place. There are many topics within our field that do not have Wikipedia entries, yet. For instance, at this time (May 2009), there are no Wikipedia pages on arts-based research or multicultural art education. In addition, there is little to no art education information on the pages of these related topics: service-learning, critical thinking, interdisciplinary curriculum. As these pages stand now, they are woefully inadequate and do not represent the liveliness, tensions, possibilities, complexities, and other ways of being wise in our field. It's up to us to create who we are and want to be via the tools of Web 2.0, and Wikipedia may be one place where we can experiment with creating a modern text.
References


The Space Between: Intersubjective Possibilities of Transparency and Vulnerability in Art Education

Sara Wilson McKay

This paper argues for the pedagogical value of the pursuit of transparency and vulnerability in art education. The author defines transparency and vulnerability in the context of art, offering subsequent pedagogical examples of both. Possibilities are born through intersubjectivity and answerability, the Bakhtinian notion that considers “how shall I say [do] anything when the other can answer?” (Bakhtin, 1990; Nielsen, 2002). The author asserts that art educators should pursue an idea of transparency and encourage an open attitude toward vulnerability in their pedagogy to emphasize intersubjective relationships and social possibilities through art. The author discusses artwork by Kelli Connell and Ann Hamilton, museum exhibitions including John Cage’s “Rolywholyover A Circus for Museum” and “Spirited Journeys: Self-Taught Texas Artists of the 20th century,” and the Museum of Jurassic Technology as supporting examples.
There are only highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds. All these pictures of the world should not be allegories of infinite mobility and interchangeability, but of elaborate specificity and difference and the loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another’s point of view. (Haraway, 1991, p. 190)

What if we were to consider transparency, and its “other” vulnerability, as Bakhtinian dialogic subjects requiring each other for possibility to arise? In this paper, I argue that imagining the intersubjective landscape between transparency and vulnerability links these two concepts in ways that are beneficial to art education. Further, linking them dialogically creates pedagogical possibility in the field.

I understand transparency and vulnerability through the work of socio-linguist, Mikhail Bakhtin. Working in the early part of the 20th century, Bakhtin resisted a Cartesian understanding of self-other relations and was intensely interested in the structures of meaningful exchanges, both written and spoken. Additionally, he extended the arena of meaning-making to that of doing, everyday actions in the world. He advocated that actions (like speech acts) are best understood between subject and subject, not between subject and object. Bakhtinian scholar, Michael Gardiner (2000), characterizes this intersubjectivity as a necessary recourse in a world with limits to our knowing. According to Bakhtin, we can access more of the world, that is to say participate more fully and more meaningfully, within a dialogic intersubjective space. For Bakhtin, dialogue “stresses con-
tinual interaction and interconnectedness” (Gardiner, 2000, p. 57) and results in our ability to be present in the world as “individually and answerably active human beings” (Bakhtin, 1993, p. 7). Working against this meaningful space of answerability are modern conditions that “privilege a purely cognitive relation to the other and our lived environment, which in turn reinforces an instrumental, disengaged attitude towards the world” (Gardiner, 2000, p. 48). Because art often seems to operate in North American culture without much thought to answerability, requiring a participative subject, there are many disconnects among general cultural beliefs.

On one hand, art comes with baggage. For many, art functions largely by the myth of genius, the transcendental mysteries of its origins, and awe-inspiring unknowability. On the other hand, North American culture, particularly US culture, is plagued by the legacy of “getting it right,” whatever it is—finality and stasis are perceived as stable. In this vein, uncertainty and change should be minimized at all costs. So the question becomes, what is the space between the unknowable—on one hand—and predictable standardization, on the other? Certainly, there are many artists who actively work to undo the myths of art, but, somehow—Juanita (or Jane or Joe) Q. Public’s perception of art persists—art is the mysterious creative gift bestowed upon the lucky or the weird. And Juanita (or Jane or Joe) Q. Public also asks that learning and the world be static, formulaic and predictable. Such wishes and realities lead to hegemonic systems of oppression and a lack of identified possibilities for imagining something else to be. Where else to look for such possibilities, but in the space between?
In Kelli Connell’s large color photograph, *The Space Between* (2002), two figures cropped closely frame the image—one in profile, one in three-quarter view (see Figure 1). The middle third of the image is a blur of street and greenery, highlighting a drop of water on the end of the woman’s nose on the right. She appears to have been caught in a sudden rainstorm. The woman on the left is dry, and looks at the other woman with an indiscernible expression on her face. She is definitely thinking something, but what? Who are these women? Why is one wet and one dry?

Upon closer inspection, it is barely noticeable that the women are actually, despite their different shirts, the same woman. More questions arise. How could this photograph of a seemingly real moment have been created? And to what is “the space between” referring? Is it the physical space between the two figures? Is it the psychical or emotional space between the two women, since they are
both in fact the same woman? What has occurred between the two figures resulting in such a scenario and how has the artist achieved such a contemplative moment that draws us into the story, into the space between these two figures' intimate yet impossible moment?

Connell’s artwork representing the tension between what we expect a photograph to be, a stable moment captured in time, and the mystery of altering photo negatives to create an impossible scene, is an allegory for the spectrum of expected attitudes toward art. At one end of the spectrum, art is knowable, organized, and understandable and at the other end, art is a complete mystery. In thinking of the space between mystery and predictability, attitudes of vulnerability and an understanding of how vision (in the form of transparency) contributes to openness toward things new and challenging both hold powerful pedagogical potential. This paper examines the possible roles of transparency, metaphorical seeing through something that allows for openness and revealed politics, and vulnerability, exposure and openness for potentially significant change, in art education.

Transparency: What You See is What You Get?

With current trends toward user-created content on the Internet, transparency, or the illusion of transparency, in the forms of blogs and YouTube abounds. Transparency implies seeing it all, but one can never "see it all." Art instruction teeters on this delicate line revealing art’s "secrets" to students, making art accessible and knowable to students, while at the same time acknowledging that art is indeed a mysterious endeavor.

I have found through pedagogical experiences, involving an explicit idea of transparency, that students demonstrated more access to and comfort with the "mysteries of art." A cursory examination online reveals contemporary circulation and use of this idea—the mysteries of art, a view particularly developed around Modern Art
and those artists’ perceived acts of genius. But in thinking through how mysteries function in art learning, I relate three experiences here that suggest important points of how pursuits of transparency, as opposed to tools for unlocking the mysterious like the relentless use of the elements of art and the principles of design, can facilitate student learning in art.

“Rolywholyover”: Seeing Power

The first event that I have chosen to discuss occurred early in my teaching career when I took my inner-city, low-income Latino middle school students to the Menil Collection, a privately-funded museum in Houston, Texas. That April experience was our first (and only, due to limited public school funds) field trip of the school year. An exhibition titled “Rolywholyover a Circus for Museum” by composer John Cage was on display that Spring, and we took advantage of the large packed gallery as well as the permanent galleries of the Menil Collection, during our visit.

It is useful to set up this experience through the contrast of “Rolywholyover” with the other more traditional galleries of the Menil Collection. Upon arriving at the museum, I gave my students an introduction to each section of the museum, before giving them time to wander as they wished in each section before we moved on to the next gallery. The first gallery consisted of many modern works, by such artists as Ellsworth Kelly, Francis Bacon and Michael Tracy. The second gallery was devoted to the Menil Collection’s extensive Surrealism collection. Students saw work by Magritte, Duchamp and Exquisite Corpse. By this point in the semester, I was well into a Modern Art Curriculum that I had developed, so my students were familiar with ways of looking at artworks and knew a lot of context for many of the works of art, particularly the Surrealist work. Consequently, my students had looked at a lot of art reproductions and were quite free within the context of our cozy classroom to offer
opinions, criticism and interpretations; but, few of them had much experience at all in looking at art in a museum setting.

The activity guide I had created asked students to look at a few specific works of art, write descriptions, and discuss questions and feelings that accompanied their looking. They were asked to evaluate choosing best and worst pieces in each section and to explain their choices. They were also asked to choose one artwork to sit with and interpret. We then moved into the larger gallery where the Cage exhibition was installed, or rather continually in the process of being installed.

"Rolywholyover" is a word coined by James Joyce (in fact, Joyce used it as a verb), and it was chosen by Cage to capture his celebration of dynamism and change. The entire exhibition was constructed by randomness. Area museums donated pieces that were arranged by Cage's computerized I Ching. The traveling artworks were arranged and rearranged daily, at specific random hours, as the computerized random generator dictated. Pieces were listed by numbers, not names and artist identifications, and hung in unusual ways where the viewer was impressed by the extreme height at which some pieces were hung and the proximity of some hangings. There were quite a few installation pieces involving interactive video and computer terminals. Additionally, just outside the large gallery, there were drawers and drawers of items connected to Cage such as a letter from Ad Reinhardt and sketches and ideas from Merce Cunningham. The opening of each small drawer revealed new unexpected bits of information.

In constructing a guide for my students in this gallery, I tried to provoke a celebration of randomness and indeterminancy and emphasize the important roles these key concepts played in the exhibition. Students were asked to observe things that were different in this gallery as opposed to the more traditional ones we had just visited; they were asked to postulate why there were such differences. On the bus to the museum, students had been given numbers and
were asked to find artworks that had their digit in the listing. These randomly selected artworks were then described in terms of their installation, location, medium, and content. I asked them to consider why this was called a circus. They also had selected a random word from a hat (like “bowl,” “shook,” “spoon,” and “gigantic”), and then had to ask three other students their words with a goal of composing a sentence using the four words. Also, I walked around with a tape recorder (the entire time we were in the gallery) recording sounds, student reactions, other patron’s conversations, and installation sounds. Students were also asked to comment on my activities.

My students’ experience in the “Rolywholyover” gallery, at the Menil museum, was the most significant of the entire field trip. Being able to assess the differences in the galleries, in terms of structure and order, gave them a tremendous sense that Cage was fooling with expectations. This could be characterized as the artist’s subversion of conventions. The students observed in the first two galleries that the museum conventions were rather austere with didactic labels and gallery education, yet, this was disregarded in the “Rolywholyover” gallery.

The “Rolywholyover” gallery drew attention to, and required critical perception of, the mechanisms behind the exhibit and the power that controls which works are important and which are displayed prominently, and which are less so. In the other galleries, “Don’t touch” or “Don’t stand too close” was on their minds; in this gallery they observed explicitly the exhibition structure. The students saw the computer printing out the generated changes. They saw works being hung and taken down right in front of them. Students observed museum employees use gloves to handle artworks, and noticed how they touched the artworks. They questioned why some works were difficult to see because of where and how they were hung. They wanted to see more. They questioned why there were no guarantees that a work would be moved to a better display place
at another time. Students wondered how they could come back to see it again in a totally changed state. They wondered how this might change their impressions of the artwork.

My students definitely questioned the conventions of a museum. The differences in galleries were so marked that they were able to identify the areas where museums exercise power in the structuring of exhibitions. In short, the power behind the institution was revealed to them. Many of my students grasped this and were much freer in speaking to patrons, who were noticeably perplexed by the unconformity of “Rolywholyover.” Their cooperative wonderment transgressed usual social limitations—age, ethnicity, language. Students saw power at work and realized it is mutable. Possibilities exist within institutional structures. The transparency of the “Rolywholyover” exhibition gave us cause to see otherwise and move beyond the realm of what is and consider the realm of what could be.

Self-Taught Artists: Seeing Possibility

A second pedagogical experience, with regards to transparency, occurred for me in 1998—with the installation of the exhibition “Spirited Journeys: Self-taught Texas Artists of the 20th Century” at the Blaffer Gallery, the Art Museum of the University of Houston. At the time I was teaching nearly 100 potential elementary generalist teachers at the University of Houston. These students as a population were generally female, aged 20-40, and very quick to self-declare their lack of creativity, their perceived deficit of artistic ability.

Each semester, I utilize museum exhibitions in my teaching to open up the artworld to students; hopefully, demystifying the perception of elitist institutions. “Spirited Journeys” was an exhibition of 38 self-taught artists from across Texas. Self-taught artists “may not have had access to formal schooling or the mainstream art discourse” (Ulbricht, 2000, p. 46). Assumptions are often made that these artists create “because of a need to sustain personal traditions or
communicate with self and others in local communities” (p. 46).

The experience of my students, who visited “Spirited Journeys” that semester, has remained in my consciousness for some time now. Like the “Rolywholyover” exhibition, “Spirited Journeys” was transformational for many of these students, future teachers, in terms of what they believed about art and its role in society. In thinking through the significance of the exhibition, I have repeatedly asked myself why this exhibition seemed to have more impact than other experiences I have shared with students over the years. I have come to believe that because my students saw the artists as ordinary people—single moms, grandmothers, felons, the religiously motivated—without special training, they could see themselves in the work. The exaggerated quality of lack of perfection, the obsessiveness, the prominence of faith, the family stories all provided entrance for the students to the world of art. The exhibition was accompanied by wonderful didactic material, describing each artist’s motivation for making. Students could see in the variety of motivations, possible reasons to open up to art for themselves as well.

The compelling work made with ordinary materials, by untrained hands, showed another side of art that the students had rarely seen. Its presence in a museum encouraged students to ask themselves why art matters and what should be valued by institutions and by them. Seeing more of the story of art—being privy to more personal motivations for making art—led students to recognize transparency in art-making that they had not previously considered.

**Museum of Jurassic Technology: Seeing Obfuscation**

In contrast to the two previous pedagogical experiences involving transparency, let us consider the complex and somewhat humorous Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles (Culver City), California. The Museum of Jurassic Technology has as its mission: “The Museum of Jurassic Technology in Los Angeles, California is an
educational institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge and the public appreciation of the Lower Jurassic" (Museum of Jurassic Technology, n.d., ¶ 1). Visitors are caught up in the mystery of the museum and the mystery of art, almost immediately. The didactic labels in the museum are verbose, the audio tour is expertly obscure, and passageways are dimly lit, providing extra punch to the dramatic lighting on the various exhibits. Everything about the museum implies authoritative knowledge, but the bizarreness of the contents of the museum—a spore-growing ant, an image of the pope carved on a grain of rice, a bat that can fly through walls—asks the viewer to question every traceable fact, yet believe every outlandish claim.

The aura of the Museum of Jurassic Technology, because it indeed functions as a full-blown instance of performance art, is one meant to call attention to the mystique of art and our expected suspension of disbelief that frequently occurs within the visual realm. Clarity is obscured for even the most persistent visitor, the one who reads every word trying to get to the punch line about the theory of oblivion and walks away from the exhibit fully believing the developed theory of Hypersymbolic Cognition, albeit with a heavy dose of skepticism.

The pointed lack of transparency in the Museum of Jurassic Technology calls visual display, as well as the possibility of transparency, into question. After considering the Museum of Jurassic Technology, transparency and its goal of revealing all becomes a known impossibility, making all didactic labels, and all teaching about art, somewhat obfuscating, and ensuring that we only ever see at best a partial picture; however, the pursuit of transparency, not the achievement of transparency, I argue, remains an important path that opens many possibilities for art education.

The three pedagogical examples discussed above involved various levels of transparency and engendered a kind of trust on the part of students, where I was the student at the Museum of Jurassic
Technology. In general, the power of those moments came from student trust in what they were seeing. They did not feel duped by the often elusiveness and mystery of art. However, the Museum of Jurassic Technology reminds us (clearly) that full transparency is never possible and that our trust can be misused and can be limiting. The impossibility of transparency, no matter how desired, demands a look at the ways in which transparency is mobilized in our contemporary social landscape. I suggest that pursuits of transparency, while seemingly productive, require a concomitant understanding of vulnerability to realize fully the pedagogical possibilities of transparency in art education.

**Vulnerability: Creating Safe Spaces for Seeing More**

In combating oppression in learning, Freire (1970) advocated the important role of dialogue in striving toward transparency in pedagogy; but, certainly, transparency is hardly ever possible, and claims of transparency can often be unwittingly deceiving. We can never see everything. We know what you see is never all of what you get, so we must approach the world with a more humble, more vulnerable attitude. Art education can be very useful in developing this kind of mutual vulnerability.

Given that there is grand possibility for deception in trusting our eyes, pedagogy in contemporary art education must consider attitudinally what is needed to focus on pursuits of transparency. Recognizing that our vision is limited implies a need for seeing what others see also, what Bakhtin (1990) referred to as a need for other’s “surplus of seeing” (p. 134). I propose that this is best achieved when a degree of vulnerability is acknowledged and mutually agreed upon in the pursuit of seeing what we each see.

Vulnerability is not usually considered a desirable condition. Vulnerability is typically conceived of in two veins: first, in the somatic sense, it has to do with physical survival—one is vulnerable
if one has weaknesses that can be exploited. The second sense has primarily a technological meaning, but is closely related to the first given today's social networking conflations of the virtual with the actual—vulnerability has to do with security in networks. In the technological world, vulnerabilities are meant to be identified and eradicated because of the threats they pose to the stability and security of any network.

By way of example, I want to describe a few vulnerable moments I have experienced personally with regards to art education as well as consider the work of an artist who actively confronts vulnerability, and finds it important and meaningful. My goal in describing these moments of vulnerability is to argue that an attitude of vulnerability accompanying pursuits of transparency creates not only more meaningful art education, but also reveals possibilities previously unseen.

First, I attended Terry Barrett's National Art Education Association (NAEA) presentation in Boston in 2005. During his session, on the last day of the conference, he introduced participants (as we were indeed positioned) to the photographs of two contemporary artists that were unfamiliar to most everyone in the room, but quite striking in their content and execution. Unfortunately, the names of the artists escape me, but the exercise that Barrett took us through does not. After discussion of a couple of the photographs, he asked us each to write down our interpretation of one image. He also asked us to write further how the selected image relates to our life. I selected a closely cropped photograph of carpenter vices and fabric, and pondered its relationship to my life as a working mother of two with all the pressures that entails.

Barrett then asked for volunteers to share their writing. The room filled with diverse voices and compelling interpretations that made hairs stand on end. A young woman interpreted a photograph of bottles as an allegory of her own womb. Another remembered
passion for her own art-making, her voice breaking as she described the joy such making brings, and her chosen photograph had inspired her to remember. I did not share my writing that day; but, I was so moved at being privy to other's vulnerability and their risk-taking, to offer me a chance to see what they see, that I have not forgotten that experience.

A similar experience happened while I was participating in a digital storytelling workshop with Joe Lambert, Founding Director of the Center for Digital Storytelling. He began the workshop asking us all to describe in writing a time when art moved us. I wrote about my first encounter with Mary Kelly's Post-Partum Document at age 26, well before children were in my landscape. I described how this piece, especially its culminating dangling question mark at the end of the series of a mother's careful recordings and calculations about her newborn son, made me want to share this work of art with every woman I knew. I was alone when I saw it, and maybe that was why I agreed to share, when Lambert asked for volunteers. In the middle of giving voice to my description, my voice broke, belying the significance of this event for me. These two events made me realize, personally, that vulnerability is a necessary condition for seeing more. Had the participants in those two art educational experiences not embraced our vulnerability and had we kept our words to ourselves, the experiences would have been severely limited, or non-existent. We would not have shared meaning in and through art.

Ann Hamilton's recent and ongoing use of a pinhole camera in her mouth is an extension of her exploration of adaptive photography and video, including putting cameras on her fingers. In her *Face-to-Face* series (ongoing since 2001), she exposes a pinhole camera in her mouth at a distance of about a foot from the face of the person she is photographing for two minutes. The elliptical prints are ghostly, slightly blurred, and the lips resemble the shape of the eye—a dislocation of one sense to another that Hamilton claims is "one way
then we come to see something differently.” (Simon, 2002, p. 12)

In her Art:21 interview on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) series associated with spirituality, Hamilton goes on to address explicitly the vulnerable quality of the project:

You know you’re never supposed to have your mouth open in public ... It’s a vulnerable position; it’s a place where you’ve relaxed and you’ve let yourself be open and vulnerable in a way ... in the act of actually doing it, it became very interesting to register this time of standing quite still, face to face with another person, and to make oneself vulnerable, in fact, to another person...but there’s another kind of strength that comes forward in allowing yourself to occupy that position. (Public Broadcasting Service, 2001, ¶ 4)

She adds further:

But even in situations where it’s more or less a stranger, that being willing to stand face to face or to turn and allow that kind of odd, formal, but very intimate act—that it’s about opening ... it’s about revealing something other than someone’s physical features...you can have what feels like a very profound, oddly profound, moment, and yet you know there’s nothing of that on the film. (¶ 10)

Hamilton is describing what Dewey (1934) names as “willingness,” characterized as an undoing of elements that “in prior experience, got so bound together” that without some degree of unbounding, the perceiver will not be able to “interact freely without deflection or restriction” (p. 250). Attitudes comfortable with the unclear and the ambiguous are more likely to be willing to “disassociate” in order to engage with new, often challenging, art. This disassociation
is not some kind of critical distance from which to see a situation definitively, but rather it is willingness to engage and experience without a concept of fixity.

However, responsibility for partial visions and attitudes toward change and resistance lie with each person because each of us is "subject to the influence of custom and inertia, and has to protect himself [/herself] from its influences by a deliberate openness to life itself" (Dewey 1934, p. 304). Art education that enacts such deliberate openness by emphasizing the partiality and limitations of vision, transparency with all its wonderful yet limiting trappings, requires an acknowledged degree of vulnerability to unearth social possibilities in and between people. Bakhtinian answerability, a concept that reminds us to speak and act as if we will be answered, suggests that such intersubjectivity is best described as “co-being” that involves an unfinalized openness of the self-other relationship that is at the root of answerability (Nielsen, 2002, p. 47).

**Naked and Vulnerable: Exploitations and Education**

I conclude this article with a few recent explorations in transparency and vulnerability. First, the cover of *Wired* magazine, in April 2007, featured a female TV star from the sit-com, *The Office*, clad in her short skirt business suit holding a sign that said “Get Naked and … ” and when you open the transparent cover, her clothes are gone replaced with a larger sign declaring:

... Rule the World. Smart companies are sharing secrets with rivals, blogging about products in their pipeline, even admitting to their failures. The name of this new game is RADICAL TRANSPARENCY, and it's sweeping boardrooms across the nation... So strip down and learn how to have it all by baring it all.
The message of Thompson’s article “The See-Through CEO” (2007) is about the possibilities and pitfalls of radical transparency. One blogger, Mark Safranski, who responded to Thompson’s online writing of the article pre-publication, declared “Secrecy won’t be dead. It will simply hide in plain sight. The hyperconnectivity and transparency of this kind of world accelerates the flow of information, creating incentives to hijack the process to push particular memes, including disinformation” (p. 137). Suddenly the intricate connections of transparency and vulnerabilities created by such transparency are very apparent.

A curious exercise in the realm of vulnerability is the Post Secret phenomenon where Frank Warren invites people to send him artworks on a postcard revealing an untold secret. Warren then posts selected ones on the Post Secret website each Sunday. There is an intricate relationship of vulnerability and transparency inherent in the Post Secret art project. Finally revealing a secret makes one feel vulnerable, but making it public, even transparent yet still somewhat private and hidden, is a safe kind of vulnerability. Judging from the kinds of secrets revealed at Post Secret—such as staying silent after rape, hypocritical racial prejudices or not revealing one’s sexual feelings/actions—the Post Secret art project provides a space of moderate transparency and safe vulnerability. As I read the entries on the website or in the Post Secret books, I am struck by the breadth and depth of human suffering and experience. I enter an intersubjective space through the art project that enacts that openness of the self-other relation.

Art education that explores transparency while acknowledging the limits of our seeing (knowing), and cultivates a willingness to be vulnerable and to respect vulnerability in others, creates intersubjective possibilities. I agree with Gardiner (2000) that thinking and acting in a dialogic “participative fashion” yields a “creative entity that strives to attribute meaning and value to its life and surroundings” (pp.
Art education should look to answerability as exemplified here through transparency and vulnerability in order to cultivate in our students "continual communication with, and responsibility to, concrete others" (p. 51).

I argue, an open attitude toward transparency and vulnerability in art education holds the following benefits for students and teachers of art:

- It helps us see how important it is to see together. It helps us recognize we can never see the whole picture, and that relying on others to help us see more can minimize yet require personal vulnerability. Dialogic interpretation of works of art can enact this point in our pedagogy.

- It helps us understand that there are many ways to see the world, valuing multiple interpretations of what is seen and unseen.

- It helps us know that we can make something else to be because imagination is related to seeing more, or wanting to see more.

- It helps us develop comfort, with that which does not resolve into easy finality, and a degree of empathy for and with others in difficult and challenging situations.

Engaging with artworks, exhibitions, and art experiences that acknowledge and understand the relationships of transparency and vulnerability in the social processes of art will push art education into new arenas of social possibility.
References


Thinking of the Frame Otherwise: Putting Art Education into the Abyss of the Real

Jan Jagodzinski

This paper argues against designer capitalism's perpetuation of consummatory experience—the 'oral-eye.' An attempt is made to introduce a form of 'psychoanalytic deconstruction,' as a strategy to retain a critical art education. I attempt this by examining two images on the covers of Art Education published in 1998. The argument was formulated in 1998 and presented at NAEA's millennium conference in Los Angeles.

The Aesthetization of the 'Wor(l)d-Picture': Promoting the Oral-eye

As our topographical print culture begins to recede, the iconic image rises to 'hieroglyphic' status as exemplified by the

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1 This essay was first written in 1998. I have updated it by way of answering two critical comments by reviewers but it has been left, by and large, unchanged. It remains a historical document for me. I dedicated this essay to Vincent Lanier who passed away on August 31, 1997. Vincent was my 1980 dissertation external who may not have endorsed all that this essay tries to do, but is certainly a kindred spirit when it came to 'gadfly' attempts of questioning the field, especially his essay on the "misdirected eye" (1978). His spirit haunts this essay, which was presented in 2000, at the turn of the millennium, during the NAEA's Convention in Los Angeles that April.
minimum redundancy of Nike's 'swoosh,' thereby forwarding the persuasiveness of a 'glance' aesthetic wherein the surface appearance (gestalt) is quickly scanned, and an impression registered for its affective meaning. The 'sound bite,' the 'look' (of fashion), the cinematic 'scene' shot, the computer graphic, 'speed' reading (for key signifiers), and newspapers such as *Die Bild Zeitung* and *USA Today* are all exemplary manifestations of this phenomenon, but it takes the 'erratic' viewing of an MTV music video to grasp the density of its meaning and the speed of a television commercial which are surely the paradigmatic forms.

My neologism for such a glance aesthetic is the 'wor(l)d-picture.' Wor(l)d communication, made possible by satellite and Internet technology, has become aestheticized to further increase the speed of information transfer by rapid scanning. Any art educator who has not come to recognize, or be affected by the hyper-aesthetization of the image in the specular economy of transnational postmodern capitalism must surely be an anomaly. With the collapse of the cultural gap between so-called popular and high art, it seems as if the justification for the very core of our survival as art teachers in an information age, has been given to us on a silver platter. We now can claim with self-assured impunity—that the value of 'design' can be seen in all things around us. The organic and in-organic can be imploded into one another in the name of 'fundamental' structural principles of design. The teaching of art in schools can now be justified and defended for the 21st century for art's 'oblique' ability to increase ('boost') cognitive capacity through its integration with other subjects, as well as its ability to enhance 'critical reflection' made possible through the criticism of art objects. Furthermore, arts education's specific and unique ability to teach students to see the wor(l)d aesthetically (e.g., Eisner, 1998) appears more justifiable than
ever. Design education, in particular, with its smooth integration with computer technology and the media industry, have been elevated to special status (in this regard) through the National Art Education Association’s (NAEA) The Design Issues Group (DIG), established in 2001, and the Electronic Media Interest Group (EMIG), established earlier in 1995. Design’s utility within an information society far exceeds the variety of other directions art education has taken: fine arts, visual culture, material culture, and popular culture. There is a definitive tension between design and its ‘other.’ There are now a number of art and art education journals (Journal of Computer-Aided Environmental Design and Education, Information Design Journal, CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts, and so on) dedicated to study of design. Computer workshops and presentations on latest software applications at the NAEA conferences have standing room only, and are often over-booked. Such topics as “digital imaging,” “microcomputer graphics,” “computer art design and posters,” “advanced applications in computer graphics,” “interactive computer hypertext,” and so on, are very popular. ‘Sold-out’ seems to be a ubiquitous stamp appearing over such workshop descriptions sent out as pre-conference material (see image “SOLD OUT).
The rejoicing of this re-invigorated *raison d’être* for art education in our information age society can easily be illustrated. The future of art education certainly appears ‘rosy’, or should I say ‘sunflowery’ on the cover of *Art Education’s* 1998, September issue (see Figure 1). A somewhat amused androgynous teenage face (there are not enough clues to make a definite gender identification) addresses the reader, peering over her/his glasses which have sunflowers reflected on them. The special theme is ‘critical lenses,’ and the editorial tells us that it is possible to put on different ‘glasses’—even ‘lens-less ones’—which is another way of telling us that we need only don a particular attitude in order to understand yet another perspective of an art object. That is to say, we can study it formally, or change ‘glasses’ (attitudes, methods, structures) and study the same (art) object contextually, i.e., socially, historically, economically, its class bias, and so on. The assumption of such a procedure being that, with enough different lenses, the richness of understanding the object will increase and appreciation of it will grow as any number of perspectives proliferate. Given such an argument, the process of criticism must transform itself along the same trajectory as the movie *Pleasantville*, that is, “to forestall premature closure” (as advocated by Eisner, 1998, p. 15) of seeing the wor(l)d only in black and white—rather dull, uninteresting, lacking in detail—into the possibility of seeing all its pluralistic richness and splendor through the vividness of cinematic color. The more glasses (perspectives) that are tried on, the more likely that this hyperaesthetic rich picture will emerge. And what a lovely textual image it is too — one which is reinforced by the cover design, especially the reflected wor(l)d of sunflowers on the wearer’s glasses; the paradigmatic

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2 Used with permission from the National Art Education Association. Permission granted in June 2002, by Claire Grosgebauer.
allusions to the sun, to warmth, to sunglasses and, of course, to the textural richness of Van Gogh's sunflowers are all there.

Figure 1. Art Education, 1998, 51(5), Critical Lenses
Another good example of celebrating art’s cognitive enhancing and aesthetic possibilities appears in July’s 1998, *Art Education* issue entitled “Windows on the World” (see Figure 2). The surrealistic cover features a floating window frame in the clouds. The shutters are partly open, and through them we see the sphere of the earth; the water is a dark blue color while the land is green. The Eastern hemisphere is featured (China, the Pacific rim, and Australia). Where the earth’s sphere appears through the glass of the two shutters, the value of the clouds, the sky and the earth become a slightly darker shade. Balanced on the window frame’s edge is a potted white plant. Its variety is difficult to tell—perhaps it belongs to the hardy Begonia family? The editorial begins by describing a personal experience of what can be described as an absolutely gorgeous view of a New England landscape from a bedroom window. With a different shift in attention, the editor tells us, we can refocus our look on the window frame itself, and experience it as an aesthetic object by attending to the nuances of its surface qualities—“its orange tones,” “the patterns of the wood’s grain,” “the glossy varnish on the sill,” and so on (Stankiewicz, 1998, p. 4). Like the previous theme in the January 1998 issue of *Art Education*, “Learning In and Through Art,” authors in this issue re-enforce the way art can study the wor(l)d, other cultures, the environment, history, and other academic subjects, this time through various artistic windows which now—both syntagmatically and paradigmatically—displace the signifier /glasses/ in the previous example. The proliferation of these windows (including the aesthetic attention to the window itself) emerges as a metaphor for ‘interdisciplinary teaching’, which again, not only enriches seeing the wor(l)d we live in, but now is supplemented by the rationalization that art as a form of ‘representation’ contributes to cognition and human develop-
ment. This last justification for art leads directly towards the fastest growing sector in the humanities: ‘cultural studies.’

Figure 2. Art Education, 51(4), Windows on the World
The above discussion points to just how far postmodernism can be characterized by the aesthetization of the 'wor(l)d-picture' as promoted by designer capitalism. Such consumerism of the image, made possible by the speed of information and the emergence of a glance aesthetic, promotes what might be metaphorically called a consumerist 'oral-eye' where the illusion of choice is really no choice at all. Slowing down the process, as in my previous descriptions, certainly can disturb the 'glance.' This becomes possible through the signifiers and the rhetoric of language. But, the image is faster than the word. Choices are made more by 'contagion' than by reason and rational analysis. If it weren't so, the advertising industry would collapse. The illusion must be sustained at the level of affect. It has been the collapse of high and low culture which has made the 'beauty' of design supercede any claims that art might have to 'truth.' Popular culture and its academic variant—cultural studies—have emerged paradoxically offering us fantasies, teaching us how to desire and consume the offerings of capitalism. While the best efforts by art educators and academic cultural critics are meant to cut through the fantasies of the marketplace—to show its racist, heteronormative, neoliberal biases—the paradox often emerges in the way 'resistance' becomes interpreted as postmodern irony (e.g., *The Simpsons*), or in the way designer capitalism is able to productively play with any forms of critique aimed against it (e.g., the Fcuk design campaign), which then leads to forms of cynicism given the ineffectuality of critique. Thus, while design has embraced the fantasies of techno-scientific culture, it seems that there is line of flight in the broader field of art that has moved in the opposite direction; into what Jean François Lyotard once characterized as the aesthetics of the sublime, bringing us against what is un-symbolizable, what can't be seen.
The ethical duty of the art educator as artist today should be, on one level at least, to ‘ruin’ the representational affects of mediated consumerist fantasies that, first and foremost, are felt through the body as impacted by images, sounds, and signifiers and to encounter the sublime as the unsaid, unthought, and unseen—the beyond. The following is an example drawing on psychoanalytic paradigm as to how this might begin to be carried out within the context of the images already introduced—while sound is absent, the linguistic signifier is still present. I call this an example of ‘psychoanalytic deconstruction.’ It should be said from the outset that this is but one strategy available for such representational ‘ruination.’

**Deconstructing the Oral-eye**

I have previously introduced two *Art Education* covers in order to begin to deconstruct them from a psychoanalytic perspective and present another thesis—a radical counter-thesis as to the effect that the proliferation of these richly saturated hyperaesthetized *Pleasantville* images (and the attendant pluralistic critical encounters with them) have on students, viewers, and spectators in this postmodern moment, and then provide yet another counter-thesis which would radically rewrite our understanding of what a critical art education might provide for students who live in a spectacular telematic society like ours, of television, film, and cyberspace. Let me begin with the first image. Although the editorial text attempts to interpellate the viewer into its ‘sunflowery wor(l)d,’ there is a way to begin to estrange this image; to begin to approach a psychic dimension that is invisible but whose traces (its “constitutive outside” in Derridean terms), nevertheless, can be read. (If the reader is able to look at the full cover image of *Art Education*—rather than the small picture in Figure 1—before
reading any further, the effect of what I am about to describe will be enhanced. Not only that, but it will act as an empirical test of a ‘reading strategy’ on which I am about to embark.)

Perhaps the first thing to note is the ambiguity of the face. Is it a boy or a girl? At first glance, I had the tendency to say ‘girl,’ but the longer I looked, scanning for the image for clues, it is just as easy to imagine the face to be that of a young adolescent boy. Obvious gendered clues have been removed. The ambiguity of the image, perhaps purposely androgynous so as to present a ‘politically correct’ position—a ‘gender neutrality’ if you will—has become a little strange. Now look at the eyes. If you look at both eyes and the lips it seems as if the face is smiling with amusement. Now, look again, but only concentrate on the right eye (the eye that has been cropped). Is the figure now smiling, or does a devious, perhaps ‘wry’ grin begin to show itself? Again, an ambiguity emerges. It becomes undecidable. Lastly, what do you make of the nose? The ‘freckled thing’ appears to be on the verge of disappearing; it is there and not there at the same time. Look again and let the nose ‘disappear.’ The image now begins to Scream, like the head of Munch’s homunculus that has no nose and no ears. The absence of a nose makes the face a horrible thing to look at. There is something there, in the ambiguous features of the face which is being covered over—repressed—from which we viewers are being protected against, especially by the vividness of the sunflower glasses. From what do you think the spectator is being protected?

Let us now go to the first editorial text and re-consider the metaphor of glasses in another way. Rather than maintaining the image of an art object that is being looked at by a myriad of different frames, each frame being like a pixel of color informed with meaning, thereby digitalizing the object into the plurality of possible meanings through various intertextualities, I present
the very ‘limit’ of such a possibility as an impossibility. In brief, by trying to synthesize as many perspectives and interpretations of the art object—we begin to stack one pair of glasses on top of one another ... if not endlessly, then arriving at the point where either all the colors have darkened (like when, on occasion, we have mixed up all the colors on our palette and end up with what is euphemistically called ‘mud’—that formless ‘bit’ of non-representable excrement); or, working the opposite way, the very vividness of the colored glasses as they stack up lead to the very blindness of light to a point where we are unable to ‘look’ at it. We have arrived at the two vanishing points of color theory: the complete ‘pure’ absence of light, or its complete ‘pure’ presence. These two signifiers are the limits of vision.

Before continuing with our second example, I leave you, for the moment, with the suggestion that as we approach the first of these two vanishing points of non-representability, that this is precisely where this ‘other’ image is to be ‘found’ which we could only ‘glimpse’ in the traces so described. And what is this ‘other’ image? The ‘sunflowery’ glasses of our first example is also a lure—a container for objet a. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, this refers to an absent signifier that ex-ists outside the frame (something repressed), yet frames the very discourse that is presented. The scene/seen on the glasses, which supposedly comes from a ‘reflection’ outside the picture frame, has been artificially rendered and introduced, making it ‘stand out’, covering over the ‘truth’ of the unruly student whose glimpse we can only grasp. Is it not perhaps the very sublimated fear teacher’s have of students when they get out of control and become the very embodiment of dread and horror? When students, one and all, become devilish ‘Chukies,’ to quote a recent series of horror films, all of a sudden hyperaesthetized Pleasantville and Truman’s Seahaven Island (for those who have seen these films) have turned into
David Lynch's Lumberville (in *Blue Velvet*) where the Matisse-like cutout houses and picket fences, smiling fire fighters, pet dogs, and joyful kids, mask and veil another 'truth,' another scene/seen. In *Blue Velvet*, the uncanny and unearthly sounds of toiling insects are heard as the camera goes 'underground' in the opening scenes to reveal another register of what appears, on the surface at least, to be a tranquil existence. This 'other image' is the psychic register of the unconscious, which is *ubiquitously* (and not 'hidden') there all along, co-existing in all forms of our looking, but remains repressed, namely the chaos of unruly bodies that are part of the life of the classroom. On the journal's cover, it is this 'other image' of the student which is being abjected, 'othered' to make its point. It finds no room in the symbolic constructions of art education; nevertheless this repressed non-representational image comes 'through' anamorphically, when we learn how to 'read/see' it 'otherwise.'

Let us now go to our second example, the window. Where are the traces here? At first glance, there seems to be 'no' traces of something 'repressed' or abjected. We merely see a Magritte-like surrealist generated image that appears interesting and clever, but nothing more. So, where to begin? The first question to ask ourselves is: are the shutters of the window opening or closing? The impossibility of answering such a question suggests that it is an "undecidable" in Derridean (1974) terms, an "incommensurability" in Adorno's (1984) aesthetic theory, a "differend" in Lyotard's (1988) vocabulary, or earlier yet, an "articulation" in Laclau's (1977) schema of things. It is "undecidable" for, like Heisenberg's principle, it belongs to a radically ambiguous uncertainty. It operates on a principle of "differend" because it is an unstable moment in time wherein something has yet to be judged or decided, pinned down, and "articulated." In Jacques Lacan's terms
(1998), the image is in the processes of "slipping." The signifier is being unhinged from its culturally fixed signified. Whatever conceptual vocabulary we choose, we are looking at a point of tension, a moment of wavering, of quivering, of hesitation. And what do we find on that plane of hesitation? A potted plant precariously balanced on the window's frame. If you look closely you will see that the plant itself is 'hesitating.' One side is in bloom, the other side has lost its petals; or perhaps the flowers are still in the budding stage and have not yet 'decided' if they can bloom or not for they occupy a space/time that is already part of the undecidability of the opening/closing shutters. Lastly, look at the planes of glass in the shutters. What we see through them has become progressively darker. We can now 'grimace' at the emerging anamorphic abjected picture.

What is the anxiety that is being repressed here? Against the bright blue clouds, the question of the fate of the earth has been posited. Will it survive its ecological ills? The question remains unanswered, but a gesture to the East is given, suggesting that as the West's Other—they have something to do with this threat. We can imagine the shutter doors closing, knocking over the plant, and turning the planes of glass into an opaque dark plane, taking us to the impossible point of the 'pure' absence of light. The earth, as we know it, dies; or, we can imagine the shutters being opened more and more to let in the sunshine and continue to green the earth. The buds need no longer hesitate; they will grow, moving us towards the point of the 'pure' presence of light. The reader should now recognize that the dialectical inter-relations between sublime beauty (pure light) and sublime dread, anxiety, or ugliness (its absence) are sustained by the tension of the 'framed' question that the image raises.

It is remarkable that the editorial text misses, that is, misperceives, this tension of the frame. If, perhaps, the cover
came after the editorial was written (there is no way of tell-
ing), it is the fortuitous juxtaposition between the two that
creates such an excessive reading. More remarkably, then, the
question of the frame takes on a quite different meaning in
order to repress a fundamental anxiety that has arisen within
art education itself; an ‘undecidability’ which the editor is un-
comfortably aware of and must reconcile. The dispute is be-
tween two men: James Caterall (1998), who represents the
future for the growing trend in art education towards inter-
disciplinary art teaching, and Elliot Eisner, a representative of
the past who desires to retain the specificity of art education
to continue fetishizing the image for the oral-eye, and keep
the ‘splendor’ of the frame. For Caterall, the future of art ed-
ucation is a question of decentering and dissolving the frame
(an obvious nod to cultural studies), for Eisner it is a ques-
tion of maintaining its ‘discipline.’ The editor tries to overcome
this anxiety by incorporating the study of the splendor of the
frame—(might we call this, in reference to the Renaissance age,
the lure of gold in the gilt-edge?)—as simply yet another ‘type’
of window that can be studied (safely). In other words, this
requires shifting the aesthetic attitude from the view ‘outside’
to also include the view ‘inside’; or, as she calls it: “the attention
drawn to the window itself.” In brief, such a move performs
a seamless suture that can make the tension of the frame in
art education ‘disappear’ by way of a pluralism—a serial pro-
liferation of window/frames; i.e., a series of content/forms.

Nowhere then, (including within the debate itself) is
the ‘Real’ dread of art education faced: the ‘other’ tension of
the frame, that is, the possibility of the death of art educa-
tion as we know it (as a discipline), or perhaps the possibil-
ity of its re-birth (as an inter-disciplinary cognitive pursuit).
And that perhaps is the very question of the ‘framing’ func-
tion of the frame (ideology) itself towards which art education should turn its attention. Tellingly, the editor makes known her own desires: the papers in the journal were saved "during my first two years as editor", and now the time has come to let them out. The anxiety of this act is graphically marked for the editor's text itself frames the very frame of the cover's design, containing it as forcefully as it can (see Figure 3).

**AN EDITORIAL**

**Windows on the World**

When I was growing up, I loved the view from my bedroom window. I could see over the vacant lot next door and across corn fields to the hills surrounding my hometown. In the spring, I could see a few blossoming apple trees that reminded me of the trees in the framed reproduction hanging over the living room couch. In the fall, the hills were wreathed with New England foliage. When I did my winter homework in front of the window, I could watch the glow of sunset tint the small landscape. In summer, the sound of a lawnmower and the smell of freshly cut grass would drift though the window while I watched the shadows under the big maple tree darken with the dusk.

Sometimes, I would find my attention drawn to the window itself—to the orange tints of the glossy varnish on the sill and frame, to the darker wood grain creating patterns that suggested ripples or flames. I would notice the ridged lines of the crossbars framing the window panes and the small imperfection in one pane of glass that felt rough against my finger.

Continuing the theme of our January 1998 issue, Learning In and Through Art, the articles in this issue tend to treat the visual arts as windows through which we can study the world, other cultures, the environment, history, or other academic subjects. James Catterall’s response to Elliott Eisner’s article from the January issue points out that most of what is taught in school is taught through representations of some sort. He argues that learning through more artistic representations may boost academic achievement. In his rejoinder to Catterall, Eisner reiterates the importance of focusing on art-based outcomes for arts education. Eisner urges us to attend to the window as an object in itself, not merely as a means to an extrinsic end.

The articles in this issue were submitted during my first two years as editor. I have been saving each for an issue with an interdisciplinary theme. This slow but steady influx reveals how personal and school-based interdisciplinary teaching and learning have become. In spite of the emphasis that art educators place on visual art as a distinct subject of study, many schools are looking to the arts as means for interdisciplinary learning and to art teachers as potential leaders for interdisciplinary teams. For some art educators, the prospect of moving outside the artroom walls may be threatening. In her article on “Leadership Metaphors,” Rita Irwin reminds us how closely leadership and teaching are related. She points to opportunities for personal growth embedded in collaborative leadership.

If art education is to support interdisciplinary learning, we need to combine our points of view, to attend to the visual arts as subjects for study and as windows to the worlds beyond, without losing sight of the fact that interdisciplinary learning can boost artistic achievement.

Mary Ann Stankiewicz
Editor

**Figure 3. Inside Editorial, Art Education, 51(4), Windows on the World**

3 Used with permission from the National Art Education Association. Permission granted in June 2002 by Claire Grosgebauer.
In the very last paragraph a reconciliation has been found, and a ‘rosy’ picture restored once again. We can have a proliferation of [art] windows on the wor(l)d which “can boost artistic achievement,” as well as looking at the window’s frame aesthetically (to its surface qualities) in the process. The unconscious fear that ‘haunts’ her, which inhabits all our bodies, which makes all of us vulnerable and lacking, which resides in the ‘other scene’ that has been described—in this case, the possibility of art education unraveling itself—has been tamed through a rationalization, thus distancing and detaching the reader/viewer from what remains fear-provoking and anxiety-ridden in the wor(l)d to art educators, thereby missing the opportunity to inquire into what’s Really ‘eating’ art education.

**The Abyss of the Frame**

It would now be possible to explore the tensions that ‘frame’ art education by unraveling the reconciliation the editorial presents, but this is not the path that I intend to take. Rather, I would like to make the case why it is the very tensions of the frame, as illustrated above, on which art educators need to refocus their energies. What do I mean by this? The frame’s tension, in Lacanian terms a *symptom*, presupposes a concept of undecidability that finds its fullest elaboration in Derrida’s (1987) work. Undecidability is reached when a proposition of *non-identity* emerges that produces a crisis in the image (as a system) suggesting that its premises are incomplete. It reveals that any autonomous artwork is itself contradictory and symptomatic of the historical context that produced it. However, it is the moment, or point of art’s *incommensurability* (Adorno, 1984)—when it “says more than it knows” that it becomes a self-contradictory object harboring traces of a fundamental social antagonism in terms of the tensions that exist outside of
it. Yet, it is precisely these tensions as symptoms—art's negative truth—that enable it to escape, becoming simply a commodity (i.e., an aestheticized, Disneyfied object) dominated by capitalist exchange value. It can awaken a critical consciousness toward the world of exchangeable things by making visible the fundamental intersubjective antagonism that exists between subject and object as the collective history of human suffering.

It is precisely the tension of the frame as societal symptoms where unconscious is located—on the border between the inside of the image and its outside. That which is excluded 'creates' the border (the frame) as the unstated, unsaid, existing in the psychic order of the Real in Lacanian terms. As a 'marker of limits,' the (first) frame of the representation defines and gives voice to the image it encloses by foreclosing the 'other' repressed (traced) images found outside its boundary. The artwork is nothing more than an unstable result of an act of enframing, manifestly overdetermined by its border (i.e., the 'other' scene/seen). Because the frame positions us at the matrix of a scopic regime, it allows us to experience the artwork unproblematically present in 'good' disciplinary Cartesian fashion. This is 'representation' that must be ruined. Its very ubiquity, its invisibility to the spectator, and its naturalizing function 'interpellates'us (i.e., lures us) into a seemingly unique experience of looking which is misperceived (méconnaissance) as an illusionary coherence of the artwork. The generation of a 'second' frame, as a mise-en-abyme effect, does not, in any sense, guarantee rock bottom truth to be revealed, of 'reality' as such. What it does do is enable the possibility of traversing the fantasy of the first frame by, for a moment, discerning the traces of the artwork's constitutive outside. When this happens, the entire visual field takes on a terrifying alterity. The reflective mirror (the clear window) turns into a screen
estranging the scene/seen itself. There is an encounter with the sublime Real dimension. The visual field can also take on an ecstatic shine, the blinding light of spiritual/religious transformation—both are the experiences of art as an “apparition” (*Erscheinung*), as an abrupt explosive appearance that reveals the falseness of aesthetic illusion in Adorno’s terms (1984, p. 88).

Such a reading (as demonstrated above) enables a ‘second frame’—an interdiscursive context between the inside/outside—to emerge, by pulling the viewer ‘out’ of the ‘first’ frame of the picture (from the illusion of a mastering *méconnaissance*) and into a second, or perhaps a third, and even a fourth frame in order to open up the system to its “constitutive outside.” The world is now comprehended as a question and the viewer is placed in a political and ethical dilemma for a reply to his or her looking. In this sense, the work of art is a “windowless monad” in Adorno’s sense (1984, p. 64). The first frame is precisely what makes art autonomous, a “windowless monad,” and at the same time embeds it in social history.

However, because works of art are structured like monads, as *singularities*, their stored up historical content is *immanent* in the formal response to the historical context, and not through any direct reference to it. Art is not detached from the social field, rather it *articulates* (and never simply reflects) its social form. History, as the social context or ‘constitutive outside,’ is *immanent* within it. Art should not be reduced to a cultural studies cognitive approach as a possible multiple of social and historical readings (e.g., Caterall), or remain characteristically fixated on the illusion (*méconnaissance*) of its ‘first’ disciplinary frame (e.g., Eisner). Rather it requires minimally a *second reflection and a displacement* that involves ‘reading’ its undecidability, its moment of nonidentity with itself belonging to the sublimity of the Real psychic register. Art educators should seek a
determination as to what is singular in an artwork that is ‘true;’
art that destroys its own illusion, yet remains an articulation
of a specific historical context in order to raise the question
of freedom and future possibility. What are the specters—the
forces and the voices of its Other—that haunt any work of art
as representation, both inside and outside its frame? Under­
taking a ‘negative dialectics’ (cf. Adorno, 1973), understood
as the task of negating the illusion of conceptual completeness
or wholeness of the image, places our students in a position
to risk action posed by the ‘truth’ of the work of art, i.e., its
possibility as a defetishizing fetish and its potential to ‘ruin’
representation. This is not so much a hermeneutic act of criti­
cism but a psychoanalytic deconstruction, a displacement of
the act of looking as conditioned by the framed image so as
to bring students to a condition of social, political, and ethi­
cal responsibility through a confrontation of the ‘other’ made
possible by a wry or anamorphic look of alterity. In this regard
every critical work of art poses only one message: either act
or do not act. It is, therefore, more of a question as to what
such art can ‘do.’ Such art never chooses, nor preaches. It is
neither pure affirmation nor pure critique. It simply struggles
with impossibility to sublimate the human symptom as the
struggle with Real effects. Its affective ‘doing’ is precisely that.

In the last few paragraphs, I have intentionally in­
troduced the Lacanian neologisms ‘Real’ and Really to make
reference to the Lacanian psychic register of the Real, which
succinctly put, exists at the two previously mentioned vanish­
ing points, which are ‘outside’ visible perception, and hence
outside signification. They cannot be humanly occupied. The
Real is where the tension’s frame is to be found, at the very
threshold of the visible. Superimposed on one another, these
two vanishing points metaphorically ‘warp’ time and space.
That is, their intervention within signification results in the necessity of theorizing a non-Euclidean geometry within the vicissitudes of memory and future intentionality. This leads to the more difficult questions of fractal geometries and complexity theory necessary to begin to grasp the ‘new media’ and bio-art, areas that this short exercise cannot enter into for the moment. In contrast to cultural studies’ interdisciplinary cognitive understanding of art’s historicity as referencing the historical context (e.g., Caterall), this ‘inner time/space’ of art explodes, negates and ruins the aesthetic illusion (Schein), i.e., the ‘appearance’ of the ‘first’ frame. Despite the gains cognitive and neuroscience have made to update the current paradigm; they remain inadequate for an art educational direction that insists on not losing its socially critical commitment.

If such a tension and commitment is not present, the picture of our ‘reality’ stays ‘rosy’ and the encounter with the Real is missed, as has been argued regarding the editorials. The above argument, extended to the *habitus* of art education as it is presently defined, claims that art (and museum-gallery) educators, when educating our students—by and large, avoid encounters with the Real which art can provide, although this is changing. Instead, we often dwell on the aesthetization of the frame or what’s contained within it, more often inadvertently promoting consumption—educating an ‘oral-eye’—rather than creating a self-referential ‘second frame’ that brings students to the brink of their own self-awareness. And now there is the present danger that art education itself may be swallowed up and reduced to an interdisciplinary cultural studies approach. By bringing together select conceptualizations from Lacan, Derrida, Adorno and Lyotard, I have argued that art criticism as a practice of psychoanalytic deconstruction and art as an encounter with the Real deconstructs the editorial binary that has been presented
to us. This might prove to be just ‘one’ strategy among others to continue the commitment to critical social transformation.
References


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