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ABSTRACT

The "Bulletin of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education" is an annual publication, with each issue devoted to a unified theme. The theme of this issue is the social ramifications of the teaching of art. This issue focuses on art teachers to gain a perspective on the art education process as a socially relevant experience. The volume features nine papers: "The Art Educator As Disenfranchised Intellectual: A Problem of Social Legitimation" (Karen A. Hamblen); "Hold the Pickles, Hold the Lettuce Special Orders Do Upset Us: The Franchise System in American Art Education" (Tom Anderson); "Cultural Knowledge: The Unrecognized Responsibility of Art Education" (Helen J. Muth); "Art As a Social Study: Theory Into Practice" (Graeme Chalmers); "Thought on Social Contextualism in Art and Art Education" (Tom Anderson); "Art Education in Social Context" (Dan Nadaner); "Playing in Public or Creatively Expressing the Aesthetic Dimension in Social Life" (Duke Madenfort); "Nicaragua, Art and Social Change: Interviews With Three Artists" (Betty LaDuke); and "Who Needs It: A Review of 'Instant Art Instant Culture'" (David M. Quick). (DB)

THE BULLETIN

of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education

EDITED BY HELEN MUTH

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Contents

Preface

The membership of The Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education has identified the need to raise questions about issues that affect the teaching of art from a critical knowledge of its social ramifications. The papers in BULLETIN NUMBER FIVE acknowledge the importance of looking at art teachers, looking at ourselves, to gain perspective on the art education process as a socially relevant experience.

Anderson and Hamblen suggest that the intellectual and social milieu in which we live has hetherto unseen control upon our actions as teachers. Chalmers, Madenfort, and Nadaner propose alternative ways to expand the present system. The article by Muth and the review by Quick raise questions about the beliefs inherent in the system itself.

The paper by LaDuke carries its own theme. It speaks of the well being of all the arts and the support given to the artists in a war torn, impoverished country that has won the major battle against illiteracy. The arts of Nicaragua are at once both socially and personally relevant.

THE BULLETIN has changed with each succeeding publication. Unlike earlier issues, the papers presented here are not derived from presentations made at the annual NAEA convention. With the exception of the Chalmers' article, the material is newly available to the Caucus membership. Also, abstracts have been added to facilitate the reader's understanding of the intent or focus of the author's ideas.

The review process was expanded to include two associate editors and two reviewers. Each article was submitted anonymously by the editor to three readers. Two favorable recommendations were required for a paper to be accepted for publication.

The location of publication of this issue has changed also. A special note of appreciation is extended to Mrs. Judy Ellis, Art Department secretary at SMSU, for typing the final draft which was reproduced by the Southwest Missouri State University Printing Office. Additional thanks for the cover design and title pages goes to Jim Escalante, assistant professor of graphic design at SMSU.

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Helen Muth
Editor

The Art Educator as Disenfranchised Intellectual: A Problem of Social Legitimation

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Abstract

In this paper the occupational role and options of art educators are examined with the discussion generally limited to those art educators that have doctorates or prospects of university employment. On the basis of a theory that artistic knowledge comprises a form of cultural capital, it is proposed that the art educator is able to exercise power to the degree aesthetic capital is legitimated in modern society. It is further proposed that the art educator is particularly vulnerable to the Western world view wherein conditional legitimation is given to affective knowledge modalities and nonquantifiable learning. As a result, art educators often have been disenfranchised from exercising the full range of their educational expertise and have experienced varying degrees of professional alienation.

Art educators' sense of place within the educational field, their level of job satisfaction, their available options, and the future they envision are tempered and circumscribed by their socio-educational status. Within the larger scope of society, art educators are one particular group within the New Class which consists of the intellectual and technological elite of modern society (Galbraith, 1965). The New Class is essentially the foundation of our Information Society.

Unlike the Old Class of the nineteenth century whose capital and power proceeded from the accumulation of tangible goods, the New Class possesses abstract knowledge skills and educational credentials that allow it to offer services in the manipulation of theories, ideas, and information. The New Class is comprised of members as diverse as social workers, teachers, film critics, medical doctors, lawyers, and engineers, who have in common the ability to articulate specialized knowledge and to examine the rules and premises of their operating procedures. As such, the New Class encompasses a variety of speech communities that Gouldner (1979) has collectively called the Culture of Critical Discourse (CCD). The Culture of Aesthetic Discourse (CAD), of which art educators are members, is a specific community within the more

broadly based CCD (Hamblen, 1984). The CAD not only entails the articulation of written and verbal descriptions and analyses of art, but such knowledge about art that is ultimately based on an elaborated repertoire of visual imagery and its foundations in psychology, sociology, and education.

A Theory of Cultural Capital

To explain the twentieth century phenomenon of the New Class, Gouldner has proposed a multiple theory of language and of cultural capital which runs as follows: the New Class possesses specialized knowledge articulated in an elaborated, rule-bound speech code that affords its members jobs, opportunities, and incomes inaccessible to those without these intellectual skills. Cultural capital should not be considered merely an economic metaphor. Human abilities and potentials may be capitalized when they are formalized into coherent patterns of behavior; cultural capital is knowledge, skills, and information used to gain incomes and advantages. Education is the economic base of the New Class. It is through education that the New Class acquires "control of special cultures, languages, techniques, and of skills resulting from these" (Gouldner, p. 19). Cultural capital is income-producing by virtue of the power it wields and the respect it evokes.

Although the character of aesthetic knowledge and its articulation in discourse and art products comprises the capital base for the art educator, it is the knowledge-as-capital aspect of Gouldner's multiple theory that is the focus of this paper. In other words, it is not the purpose of this paper to examine the aesthetic capital possessed by the art educator, but rather to discuss the options, practices, and opportunities--or lack of them--that result from having aesthetic capital.

Through a costly and lengthy investment in educational training, the art educator acquires knowledge about art in relationship to educational methodologies for imparting such knowledge. In possessing this particular type of cultural capital, the art educator is able to exercise power to the degree aesthetic capital is legitimated in modern society. Herein lies the problem and the primary source of the art educator's disenfranchisement. Capital is socially defined. A skill, a commodity, or even a tangible good is only as valuable as society says it is. Capital's "income claims (must be socially

enforceable and culturally recognized" (Gouldner, p. 23). In some cultures a ceremonial dance to assuage illness may be a more highly prized form of cultural capital than knowledge of a computer language. Knowledge to navigate by the stars and to shoe horses were at one time highly necessary and valued forms of cultural capital. Cultural capital represents what is valued in a given society; it represents socially defined needs.

The literature of art education is replete with laments on the precarious position of art programs (Hamblen, 1983; Hobbs, 1983). It is fairly well-established that despite increased museum attendance and a high monetary value placed on the arts (Silverman, 1984), the general public still believes that education in the three Rs is more important than visual arts education. In other words, the art educator possesses a form of cultural capital that has ambivalent social legitimacy as well as lesser value than other types of educational capital. This is not to imply that all art educators experience a limited exercise of capital, but rather that disenfranchisement is a modal characteristic of the field.

The conditional legitimation of aesthetic capital may be linked to various characteristics of the field that have been discussed in the literature. These may be summarized as follows: the almost total focus on studio production to the exclusion of socio-historical and art critical content; the vested interest art supply companies have in maintaining studio pedagogy; the propagation of a formalistic ethic that distances students from their everyday aesthetic experiences; an emphasis on nonquantifiable educational outcomes; and, perhaps most importantly, the Western tendency to fallaciously separate nonverbal knowledge modalities from cognition (Beyer, 1985; Hamblen, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c; Hobbs, 1983; Lanier, 1981).

The extent to which any type of capital has legitimacy is measured by its enforceable claims when there is a threat to withhold its services; capital is legitimated to the extent its absence would create a social void. This economic law of cultural capital has potent implications for art education. All too well aware of their marginal position, art educators have wisely not tempted the social fates by threatening to withdraw their aesthetic capital services. Rather, the field of art education has often been characterized by

adjustments and accommodations to fickle social validations of worth. The remainder of this paper will be devoted to examining how art educators have attempted to compensate for an often unappreciative public, an oversupply of art professionals, an undersupply of job openings, and limited upward mobility.

Sources of Alienation

Assumptions of Moral Superiority

According to Gouldner (pp. 227-229), the New Class believes that its culture represents the highest achievements of humankind and that those possessing such capital should provide intellectual, social, and political leadership. Correspondingly, the New Class believes it should receive the greatest respect and rewards. "Intellectuals, like others, seek to equilibrate power and goodness. They want power commensurate with what they think to be their value" (Gouldner, p. 81).

No differently than other groups within the New Class, art educators have tended to believe that they provide knowledge and skills essential to the betterment of humanity. Yet, art classes continue to be eliminated from the general curriculum and society appears to increasingly depend upon and laud the accomplishments of the technocrat. The disparity between perceived value and actualized power is, perhaps, one of the reasons for the extravagant and diverse claims that have been made for the benefits of art study (Lanier, 1981).

Trapped within the painful conundrum of having a moral obligation to disseminate aesthetic knowledge, yet not receiving social validation, the art educator may refer to assumptions of professionalism and claims of moral superiority over the Old Class and other segments of the New Class. In contrast to the moneyed Old Class, the New Class is intent upon controlling the work conditions and content of their work, rather than advocating for wages per se. In contrast to the technocrat who indiscriminately applies technological skills to produce innovations, the New Class humanist focuses on the production of "worthy objects and services" and ways of avoiding alienating labor (Gouldner, p. 20). Conflict among New Class humanists and technocrats dates to the nineteenth century when the technocrats' skills were put to use by the middle class in the mass production of goods. The New Class humanist claims to rise above the exigencies of profit motivations, acquisition of material possessions, and implementation of technical control. However, as it will be noted later, when

necessary, the art educator is not adverse to forming alliances with technocrats--or the Old Class.

Meta-Discourse

Gouldner has proposed that the very nature of the capital base of the intellectual fosters disenfranchisement and alienation. The Culture of Critical Discourse (CCD), or, in this case, the Culture of Aesthetic Discourse (CAD), is based on a reflexive, problematizing stance toward itself which disallows for psychological stability and a sense of certitude. The New Class is in the business of improving, enhancing, and developing that which is. Thoroughly immersed in the values of modernity wherein change is equated with progress, the New Class cannot allow the status quo to remain as such. The New Class is in permanent revolution against itself as well as with competing factions. The proliferation of proposed programs in art education, the continual need to probe and examine the historical and psychological foundations of the field, and the finite points of argumentation that receive extensive coverage in the literature are aspects that establish the professionalism of art education and at the same time undermine intellectual security and the presentation to society of an integrated, united discipline.

Blockage of Upward Mobility

It is in the interests of any class to control their capital's supply and demand--and for demand to outweigh supply. A major source of intellectual disenfranchisement and professional alienation for the art educator has been the blockage of upward mobility and, in many cases, severe limitations on even entering the job market. The Winter, 1975, edition of Occupational Outlook (cited in Gouldner, 1979, p. 69) predicted that in the 1980s three doctoral degrees would be awarded for each available job in the arts. This dire outlook has actually turned out to be an extremely optimistic, but erroneous, prediction. In 1983, the Placement Service of the National Art Education Association listed six art education positions at the university level. In 1984, the situation improved slightly. The Placement Service of NAEA listed seven positions (Roberta Rice, personal communication, July 4, 1984). The College Art Association Bulletin advertised 11 art education positions from October 1983 through May 1984, and the Chronicle of Higher Education advertised

12 openings in issues September 7, 1983 through July 25, 1984. For 1984 employment, there were 16 separate openings in the above-cited sources.[1]

Data are not available on the number of doctoral degrees awarded during 1983 and 1984, however, Visual Arts Research, Spring 1983 and Fall 1983, listed 105 art education related dissertations cited in Dissertation Abstracts International, Vol. 42, 4-12; Vol. 43, 1-5, 7-12; and Vol. 44, 1. Perhaps an even more telling indicator of the extent to which a doctorate in art education disaffords entry into the profession is the job-applicant ratio. It is not uncommon for an entry-level, tenure-track art education position to elicit 50 to 70 applications. Nontenure, lecturer positions may receive this number or even more, since applications are received from those with masters as well as doctoral degrees. Since not all applicants for a job are currently unemployed, this number may, in addition to indicating the scarcity of jobs, also reveal the degree to which job dissatisfaction permeates the field and the degree to which there is a perceived need to better one's situation.[2]

In addition to the social devaluation of aesthetic capital and the corresponding limited job potential in the field, a more subtle source of disenfranchisement is operative. Namely, many art educators are underemployed, not only in having to accept jobs outside the field, but actually in terms of positions they hold within the field. Considering the time, effort, and extent of the education required for a doctoral degree, many art education positions do not provide a viable avenue for the exercise of professional skills. Being overly educated, even when employed in a position for which one was specifically trained, has become common throughout the New Class and is responsible for a high level of job dissatisfaction. New Class professionals, who in the past tended to remain throughout their working lives in the disciplines in which they were trained, are now changing careers several times within their working life span (Bowles, 1982; Gouldner, 1979; Shores, 1984).

Employment statistics and tales of underemployment are part of the folklore of art education, providing an oral tradition that has a powerful influence on how art educators perceive and exercise their professional options. When underemployment becomes the only option to unemployment, there are strong pressures to conform, to maintain the status quo, and to be grateful for a minimal exercise of cultural capital. Beyond the intricate network of implicit

threats and promises surrounding the granting of tenure--which is "about as easy to come by these days as the Holy Grail" (Shores, 1984, p. 33)--academia itself exercises controls on and withdraws favors from subject areas with dubious cultural capital. For example, art educators have rarely brought grant monies into the university coffers of the magnitude commanded by professionals in the sciences. The art educator has, in fact, often been put in a humiliating, defensive position, spending valuable time and energy justifying the very presence of an art education program within the university curriculum.

As others in the New Class, art educators pride themselves on being independent, on being able to judge their own performances, and being able to extend their cultural capital for the public good. Paradoxically, the privileges and advantages accrued through higher education can become a source of social and professional alienation. The possession of more cultural capital should mean more power, whereas in art education it often means having fewer viable career options in which to exercise that expansion of power potential. This discrepancy between the promises of art education professionalism and the extent to which aesthetic cultural capital can actually be exercised shapes not only the individual art educator but also the character of the field.

Controlling the Production of Cultural Capital

Although New Class humanists, in contrast to New Class technocrats, have had a relatively more tenuous place in the hierarchy of social value, Gouldner suggests that all of the New Class is inherently negative toward the status quo in "attempts to better its position" (p. 12). Capital is inherently an advantage; the negativity of the New Class is a disguised form of power in that it is used to promote its own case, to aggrandize its influence, and to expand its sphere of influence. Many of the actions of the New Class can be interpreted as means to secure professional guild advantages. Capital must be actively protected, implemented, and aggrandized, or it will be devalued.

Dedicated to the improvement of society and operating with professional skill and integrity, the New Class rejects any attempt at outside control. The object of its capital power is to judge its own performances and to repro-

produce its culture--and, at the same time, exert professional standards to limit its membership. "The object of capital is not consumption but instrumental mastery" (Gouldner, p. 23). To provide more opportunities for upward mobility within any profession, legitimation of capital must be expanded; at the same time, access must be limited to those who control the capital, that is, the credentialed and degreed expert. In many countries there has been the realization that the number of New Class members must approximate the number of job openings available or severe social and political dislocation will result (Kidder, 1984; Owen, 1984). Gouldner notes that at the vanguard of all revolutions there has been a group of intellectuals whose upward mobility was blocked; this has been the case in regard to the American Revolution as well as communist revolutions and terrorist-backed actions in this century. The New Class believes that it has the moral right to cash in on its education and to exercise its cultural capital. A society that does not allow for direct opportunities or some form of sublimation is creating a subclass of dissidents.

Similar to other New Class groups, art educators have maintained the right to set their own professional standards and to maintain control of their own programs. For example, the Rockefeller Commission Report, Coming to our Senses, which was subjected to severe criticism, was actually highly similar in basic premises to many then-current art education programs (Arts Education and Americans Panel, 1977). Perhaps for that reason alone it deserved the criticism it received. It was, however, the Commission's proposal that artists might replace the art teacher in the classroom that art educators found particularly objectionable. Rejecting the Rockefeller Commission Report was a matter of professional survival; asking art educators to accept this report in its totality would have been tantamount to expecting unemployed steel workers to enthusiastically endorse a report proposing that all steel be manufactured abroad. Any foundation or philanthropy that intends to influence the character of art study would be wise both to consult and to utilize art education personnel in their programs.

Alliance for Legitimation

The field of art education is littered with programs that possessed strong philosophical and psychological rationales, yet were unable to command socio-

educational validity. It is within this push and pull between the integrity of art education programs and the general lack of social credibility that the art educator exists. This conflict constitutes the proverbial Achilles heel of art education; it provides an awareness that spurs art educators to action, formulating elaborate plans, making fantastic claims for the benefits of art study, and seeking various and sundry allies in order to legitimate aesthetic capital and to provide a professional market for its products.

Traditionally, the New Class has been in competition with the moneyed capital of the Old Class. The antagonism between the Old Class and the New Class, which can be traced to the nationalistic and democratic upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is not, however, complete. The Old Class needs the New Class to increase the productivity and efficiency of its moneyed capital. The New Class, in turn, can maintain an uneasy peace with the Old Class if allowed to exercise its professional prerogatives (Gouldner, 1979).

This author notes that although initially the artistic vanguard was allied with the middle class against the aristocracy, the vanguard has come to rely on the Old Class' support of the arts. In turn, contributions to the arts have been an avenue of legitimacy for the Old Class. A similar tenuous network of alliances and antagonisms exists within the New Class itself. The humanist intellectuals have claimed a moral superiority over technocratic intelligentsia, who are imputed to be without moral scruples in their application of mechanistic solutions to human problems. Yet, alliances have been formed for mutual benefit. In the 1960s, television was going to revolutionize the art classroom; today it is the technology of the computer chip.

Alliances for the expansion of aesthetic capital cut across all cultural classes. Alliances with Old Class philanthropic organizations and business enterprises provide access to moneyed capital and legitimation through the study of fine art and established artistic exemplars. Through scope, sequence, and testing of behavioral objectives in art curricula, New Class technocratic alliances provide pedagogical structure, efficiency, and predictability that bodes well with a public that wants quantifiable and tangible results.

In contrast to the jaded sophistication and parsimony of the Old Class and as an alternative to the dry rationality of technicism, the working class has been an attractive ally for art educators inasmuch as New Class humanists have often seen themselves as champions of popular causes. The study of popular, folk, and commercial art broadens the aesthetic capital base of art education and links the study of art to populist principles of democracy. The working class has often formed the legitimating power base of intellectuals who can then claim widespread support for their programs and expansion of cultural capital.

Integrated and correlated art education programs reveal other possible attempts to form alliances with outside sources of cultural capital for purposes of mutual legitimation. Arts education, right-brain left-brain drawing programs, museum arts education, and so on, provide interdisciplinary and hence more broadly based rationales for art study.

It is not the intent of this paper to imply that all the above-cited alliances and their correlates in art education theories and practices are without pedagogical merit. However, neither are these alliances apolitical and without consequences in the quest for legitimation and expansion of aesthetic cultural capital. It may be even suggested that the measure of aesthetic capital's delegitimation is directly proportionate to the number of alliances sought with competing status classes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has presented a theory of the art educator as the possessor of conditionally legitimated cultural capital. It has been proposed that the art educator's professional role can be examined in regard to the issues of supply and demand, sources of alienation, job security, and the types of art education programs that are proposed and accepted. For many art educators, a limited exercise of cultural capital forms the reality of their professional career and may be cause for passivity and an acceptance of the status quo. More optimistically, however, a theory of disenfranchisement and alienation due to a limited exercise of cultural capital also bodes possibilities for professional radicalism.

Aesthetic delegitimation is a very logical outcome of the Western world view. Ultimately, the problem is not art education itself, but rather social

attitudes toward the visual arts. Professional disenfranchisement is, at its most basic, a problem of social legitimation. Changing society's perceptions of art education is not merely a labor of educational readjustments nor of more professional conferences, great debates, and inhouse publications. To change social definitions requires nothing less than direct political advocacy within the bureaucracy of school districts, legislatures, and private foundations (Hatfield, 1984; Milbrandt, 1984). Furthermore, in the classroom this means making explicit the "moral force of aesthetic objects" (Beyer, 1984, p. 9) in their social context and the role art has played throughout time and space in revealing and shaping social consciousness (Brooks, 1984).

It bears repeating that capital is socially defined. In practice, art education is only as valuable as society says it is. Knowledge systems, however, such as art education, can be instrumental in shaping social outcomes. Rather than seeing aesthetic knowledge as a disembodied eternal truth, it needs to be seen as a potent ideological instrument of a special social class possessing cultural capital. The blockage of upward mobility and the marginal existence of art educators can provide a cause d'etre for increased political action and a concomitant consciousness of professional destiny denied more secure New Class professionals.

Footnotes

[1]Art education positions are herein defined as full-time employment at the university or college level requiring a PhD or EdD degree and the teaching of at least one art education class. Positions for lecturers, art therapists, arts managers, or department chairs were not tabulated.

[2]Other fields within the humanities have likewise reported similar job-applicant ratios. For example, an opening in an English department will commonly bring in 300-600 applications (Kidder, 1984; Perry, 1983).

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Hold the Pickles, Hold the Lettuce
Special Orders Do Upset Us:
The Franchise System in American Art Education

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Abstract

I have a history of advocating locally specific art content as very important to the construction of art curricula. This position arises from my readings in the area of socially contextual aesthetics (Berger, 1972; Dewey, 1958; Hauser, 1959, 1951; Munro, 1941; Wolff, 1983). By art content I mean not only thematic content but also formal qualities, media, and technical execution, all of which contribute to an artwork's style. By locally specific art content I mean the style of the work as it arises from a specific place at a specific time, and which in some way reflects the collective consciousness of the culture or subculture of the work's genesis. If one believes with Dewey (1958) that aesthetic expression arises in the context of interaction with the environment, and with Langer (1958) that the subconscious/unconscious style of an age is given form by the artist through transformation of this subliminal feeling into concrete form, and if one further believes that the transformation of subjective experience into concrete aesthetic form is an ultimate value of making art, then it follows that artists (and student artists) must be allowed to express how it feels to be who they are, and what it is like to live their lives. This mandates locally specific art content. If artists are allowed to focus on locally specific content, art becomes the reflection, manifestation, clarification, transformation and continuation of culture. If content comes from the outside, it has no vital connection to an individual's life processes and becomes mere decoration.

As an advocate of this position I was naturally pleased when asked to contribute to a Caucus panel discussion, in Miami, on the subject of how the content of my art curriculum has changed as I have changed geophysical and cultural environments in my teaching career. The initial guiding assumption, then, is that with each change in the geophysical, social, and cultural context comes a corresponding change in my curricular content.

Teaching Locally Specific Art Content

I am convinced that I have, indeed, changed the content of my teaching to reflect local conditions, as I have moved from place to place in my teaching career. Secure in the feeling that I have been aware of and sensitive to the need to adapt the content of my teaching to my local condi-

tions I examine my teaching history. What examples of content reflecting local values, mores, customs, and geophysical factors can I bring forth?

There has been opportunity in my past to experience quite a variety of American subcultures as neighbors and as students. First, was eastern Oregon's cowboy country, "I'm-a-roper-not-a-doper-and-don't-you-by-God-fergit-it" country. A very rural area, set on the edge of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, 200 miles from Portland in one direction, 200 miles from Spokane in another, and twenty-five miles from the next art teacher, Athena and Weston together have a population of 1500. From my teaching experience there, a wonderful drawing comes back to me depicting two of Nez Perce Chief Joseph's warriors, by Cecil Shippentower, one of my students from the reservation.

I also remember my move to the Rogue Valley, close to the Oregon coast. Loggers, fruitpickers, and truck farmers exist alongside white collar professionals,actors, and attendants of the Shakespearean Festival, as well as functionaries of the tourism industry. One project was studying Northwest coast Indian forms and carving a totem pole. My sculpture class, after carving the totem, decided to do another that projected more up-to-date values: a twenty-five foot tall pencil, painted yellow with a pink eraser, for the high school courtyard.

Later, in Georgia, I came into contact with black culture. I directed college students in developing a black heroes mural which depicted great black scientists and told their stories on the walls of the East Athens Community Center.

Since moving to Florida State University, I have heavily emphasized, within almost all of my art education classes, art as it reflects cultural values. My students can relate how architecture, personal adornment, tools and implements, and the fine arts reflect the cultural context of their making.

Looking back on these examples of culturally contextual, locally specific teaching, I realize with some chagrin that the vast bulk of what I have taught in my career has not changed much in relation to changing physical and social contexts. I still do many of the same projects and have many of the same concerns as when I was a student teacher at South Eugene High School in 1976. Why, I ask myself?

In terms of expressive content, there exists only a very finite number of human themes - love, hate, war, technology, greed, and so on - and a limited number of ways to express these themes visually. Was this the reason the content of my teaching had stabilized around a finite and stationary set of ideas? On further reflection it appeared that I had not exhausted all the major themes of all times in my teaching. This, then, was not the reason for my failure, overall, to match content to local context.

Examining certain underlying assumptions which must all contribute if the guiding assumption that content changes according to context is to hold true, I found a possible answer. These assumptions are: a) that the teacher must be receptive and sensitive to changing perspectives of the clientele, arising from changing conditions, b) that the teacher be willing to analyze the components of a locally specific, socially defined reality and synthesize the results in a practically useful curriculum, and c) that the teacher have a certain amount of autonomy in the implementation of a locally specific curriculum. There seems to be no problem with the first assumption. I do, indeed, try to be reasonably receptive to the local context in which I find myself. Likewise, the second assumption seems to fit my propensities in that I have sincerely tried to understand and incorporate local social values into my curriculum. Did I say my curriculum? Maybe therein lies a major problem in implementing a locally specific curriculum. It really is not my curriculum. Rather, it is culturally determined to a large extent - but not by local forces. The curriculum I use is largely propelled by the educational system and specifically the art education system into which the local forces have only a very small input. A stumbling block which has tripped me up many times when I have tried to teach locally specific content is my lack of autonomy within the system to do so. I simply am not allowed to teach exactly what I want to teach! It was during my tenure at the Oregon school where my students built the totem poles that this first became very clear to me. As the result of a mural executed by my students in which the thematic content was admittedly of questionable social taste, I was called to the principal's office where after some discussion, that principal made it very clear

what was his agenda for art by stating: "Look, I don't give a damn about its artistic merits. I don't care what you teach them as long as you keep them in line."

The Franchise System

This, then, is the franchise system of American education. Individual outlets have only very limited power to change the nature of the structure. They may change the theme - we have all beer to the cowboy McDonald's versus the 1890's McDonald's versus the local football team McDonald's - but they may not change the substance. McDonald's does not sell hot dogs in Tallahassee, or Miami, or Lake Tahoe. The franchise system does not allow for that deviation. The franchisee who does not capitulate to that requirement quite simply loses his franchise. He is ousted from the system. So it is with education.

There seems to be at least three factors at work in support of this centralized system of values, thus power, in the educational structure. One factor seems to be the adoption of competency-based education in terms of observable behavioral and project-related indicators. The Handbook of the Florida Performance Measurement System (draft version, no date available), states: "State Board Rule 64-5.75 requires the verification of demonstration of generic teaching competencies through a formative and summative evaluation process. This requirement precipitated a concern for the development of standardized procedures for conducting systematic observation and performance evaluation to ensure consistency from teacher to teacher, school to school, and district to district within the State" (pp. 14-15).

In addition to pressure for standardized teaching practices which emanate from a central source, there is also pressure to conform to a standardized content. Once again, the State of Florida has published guidelines which suggest what students in art should learn. Art: Pre-Objectives and Performance Objectives, K-8 (1978) states in addition that, "there is a necessity to relate goals in art education to the larger goals of general education" (p. 6). Seven goals are then spelled out for the rank-and-file teacher. Nowhere does the document tell us how these goals were agreed upon. However, there is a list of seventeen writers of the document, and another group of expert consultants. The goals are not unreasonable, but

neither are they completely definitive. Yet, if I am to teach art in the state of Florida, I must base my curriculum on the objectives established by this group. If I fail to do this, I lose my franchise to teach art. This certainly is centralized value structuring, with very real consequences for failure to comply. Florida certainly is not alone in competency-based education. Indeed, from my experiences in Oregon and Georgia and based on other sources, it seems to be the dominant structure in curricular design today.

A second factor selecting for educational centralization seems to be a very complex form of social Darwinism - that is, the tendency of the most adaptable and efficient systems/phenomena/organisms to dominate. Some ideas, modes of being, and courses of action tend to dominate others. We can see this in the fact that some ideas are incorporated into the cluster of controlling thoughts and institutions, and some are not. An 850 on the SAT, two years of a foreign language, one half year of art (if any at all), probably does not sound unfamiliar to those of you from Montana, or Texas, or New York. There may not be one single standard throughout the country, but wherever we teach, we are all at least in the same "idea bank." Could this be accidental? Not likely. Given random change it would never happen. There must be some process of natural selection at work in which some modes and ideas dominate.

A specific, and largely unexamined structural mode which seems to dominate in American schools and which selects against locally specific content is that the primary agenda is not education in terms of content areas; rather it is the socialization process.

According to C. A. Bowers (1974):

> school routines which make up the covert curriculum, are regarded by teachers and school administrators as serving a more pedagogically important function than the academic curriculum. The strongest evidence supporting this generalization is that students are often dropped from school for exhibiting behavior that challenges the routines of the school; they are seldom dropped, on the other hand, because they lack the intellectual ability to deal with academic curriculum.

> When viewed from this perspective, it becomes apparent that one of the chief functions of the academic curriculum is to serve as a vehicle for conditioning students to adopt the values of the school's covert curriculum. More importantly, when it is understood that the traditional school subjects are used to teach values quite different from their officially stated purpose, there is no longer any reason to be mystified about why the school curriculum continues to be so uninteresting to students and irrelevant to what they need to learn. The irrelevance of the subject matter curriculum is necessary if the student is to learn the values and traits of docility upon which his academic survival and later his career as a worker depend. (62-63)

As the principal in Oregon said, "I don't give a damn what you teach them as long as you hold them in line."

"Holding them in line" is one major aspect of education's function in the central activity of all cultures. Jules Henry (1965) believes that "central activity of all cultures is always a self-maximizing machine" (p. 191). To the extent that the art teacher contributes to this self-maximizing through adherence to the centralized curriculum and thus to the subliminal function of directing students toward the learning of predetermined social routines, he is a valuable part of the machine. To the extent that he teaches locally specific content which calls upon divergent behavior and creativity in students, he is a monkey wrench in the transmission of the machine. The socially specific art teacher as monkey wrench certainly has a place, but in the transmission of the machine he keeps the whole machine from going and must be replaced.

As cold and mechanically abhorent as this sounds to the individual who would develop a locally specific and personally meaningful art curriculum, there is, in fact, a pragmatically sound base for such inflexibility. Henry states, "Throughout history the cultural pattern has been a device for binding the intellect. Today, when we think we wish to free the mind so it will soar, we are still, nevertheless, bound by the ancient paradox, for we must hold our culture together through clinging to old ideas lest, in adopting new ones, we

literally cease to exist" (pp. 284-285). For the art educator who would teach locally specific content, this puts the monumentality of his sin in a better perspective. Locally specific content, in its essence, differs from the content of popular mass culture. That is what makes it locally specific. In teaching locally specific content the art educator is incorporating the values of that content into the processes and products of which arise from that curriculum. These, because they are at odds with or at least in variance with the mass popular culture values imbedded in the centralized curriculum, are threatening to the very foundations of the system in which they arise. Locally specific content throws a monkey wrench into the transmission of the dominant culture machine, stopping - or at least delaying - its forward progress. Henry finally states "School has no choice; it must train the children to fit the culture as it is" (p. 237).

The thought that comes immediately to my mind is, whose culture? Is the dominant culture the only one which exists, the only one whose values, mores, principles, and systems have proven to be worthwhile through time? Has culture not advanced enough at this juncture to accept a pluralistic reality? Like the mature individual who can tolerate the opinions of others, even if he does not agree, I hope this society is about to enter an age of maturity, in which the dominant institutions are comfortable enough in their power to accept some of the values, meanings, and wisdom of others. It seems, in fact, that preservation of the dominant system is much more likely when it affects an accepting rather than an isolationist stance toward new ideas. Generally those ideas which seem most dangerous and troublesome are only dangerous and troublesome because they have validity. In accepting rather than fighting such ideas a culture will usually incorporate new and vitally sustaining elements. Systems must continue to evolve with changing circumstances if they wish to continue to be sustained.

Another incident comes to mind. In Montana, where I grew up, we all wore blue jeans, day in and day out. Anyone wearing corduroy pants was most likely from somewhere else. Khakis were something we only saw on TV in movies about Ivy League schools. Blue jeans were the standard local norm. One day Mr. Clark, my favorite art teacher, came wearing blue jeans. By third period he was gone and by fourth period he was back in khakis. Obviously, the power of some centralized socializing structure was stronger

than the local social norm.

This incident illustrates a third factor which seems to work against a locally specific curriculum and which may also be defined in terms of the socialization process, this time of the teacher. It seems from my experiences, that as one rises in the system, one becomes increasingly reticent to tamper with that system in any significant way. The development, in my case, from dissenter to somewhat of a guardian of the system happened gradually, almost without my knowing it. First, had to come a measure of compliance on my part to the status quo which I found when I first became aware of my values conflicting with those of the system. Then with increasing personal investment in that system in terms of my life's energies and resources, I found myself securely locked into a structure I had first dissented against. As an itinerant art teacher in Athena and Weston, Oregon, with no other art teachers anywhere around, I was the resident expert. No one knew anything about art but me. Yet I existed on the very periphery of the art education universe. I could rock the boat as much as I wanted because I was the only one in it. With the move to the more cosmopolitan coast of Oregon came greater restriction on what I could teach and how. With each successive change as I moved up the hierarchical ladder and closer to the center of the system, I was required to accept more and more of the values of that system - indeed, to support and defend those values because of the positions in which I found myself.

It seems that systems can tolerate considerable deviation from peripheral figures. But as one becomes more central to the system less deviation is acceptable because it has a more profound impact on the system as a whole. The very structure, nature, and philosophy of a system can be affected by those at its center. Rather than a puppy nipping ineffectually at the hand which feeds it, the dissenter on the inside becomes a full-grown Norweigian Elkhound, who can do the owner unalterable harm unless it is well trained. Of course, changes from the inside of a system are not always negative, but they almost always are rather cautious and rather small. That is the institution's safeguard. It does not select for those who will potentially do it harm by making sweeping changes. As with biological species, in social systems small changes are developed, tested for a generation or so, and if they work, are incorporated into the body of that system through its institutions. It

is a survival technique of the social institution not to allow for huge changes. Huge changes could destroy the institution. Small changes will not. Dissenters then, are kept out of the institution to the extent they dissent. Interestingly, however, and referring back to the previous argument, it seems that the strongest institutions accept dissenters into peripheral positions, giving these dissenters a chance to accept parts of the system, thus developing a stake in that system. Dissent is thereby dealt with through a co-opting rather than confrontational technique.

So, it is obvious, if one accepts this thesis, that such a large change as transferral from a subliminal, yet real, curriculum of socialization of students to one of a content-based locally specific curriculum is very unlikely to come from the central power structure of the educational system. There is simply too much invested in the system as it now stands to allow for such a change. Change of this nature is also unlikely to come from outside the central power structure because of the accepting-of-small-changes (co-opting), rejecting-of-large-changes nature of the educational franchise system. Radical deviation by peripheral figures leads to the loss of franchise. Radical deviation by insiders is almost unknown, having been bred out by their advance through the system.

So where does that leave us? Beginning with the assumption that teaching content would change according to the social and geophysical context, it has been conceded that there is some change, but to a greater extent content remains the same, in spite of local circumstances. It seems that this condition stems from what I have called the educational franchise system. This is a centralized system which gives the individual and even individual school districts a franchise based on certain preconditions and the local system's or individual's willingness to meet those conditions. Three factors have been analyzed which contribute to the franchise system as it exists. First, there exists a powerful and centralized ordering of curriculum based on observable behavioral and project-oriented competencies. This centralized subject matter curriculum is essential to help students to develop a docile attitude toward what they are learning. Specifically experimental curriculae would, in their vitality, run counter to the second factor analyzed. This second point sees the true, if subliminal, curriculum in the schools as socialization, not content-specific education. Socialization requires com-

pliance, not experimentation. Third, the system perpetrates itself marvelously through devices which co-opt individuals and small groups into the whole by accepting dissenters only into its outer fringes. Then in a positively Pavlovian system of rewards for proper behavior it advances the increasingly compliant former dissenter to the middle of the organism. Only when one reaches the top of the pyramid does one have considerable flexibility once again. By the time one reaches that position, however, caution and a greater knowledge of the subtleties of the system and possible consequences of meddling have replaced the impetuous urges for changes of the outsider.

Many social activists feel that students' locally defined experiental realities should serve as a stimulus and foundation for teaching art content. The concerns of locally meaningful content, however, and those of socialization as determined by the mass culture run counter to each other. Students who are allowed to explore their own concerns to wherever they may lead are not learning the lesson of socialization which apparently dominates the educational structure. In terms of the larger society, as it is currently structured, this socialization process must be pre-iminent because students must be trained to accept the authority of the social institutions which serve them, and which, more to the point, they will serve throughout their lives. These students' survival depends not so much on learning to wield a paint brush effectively or to understand the nature of Indian totem art as it does to interact properly within the social institution in which they find themselves. Doctorates are not necessarily given to the most creative people, but more often to those who have learned to conduct themselves in such a way as to successfully make it through all the required rites of passage. A certain kind of acceptance of the status quo is required of those who would advance through the educational system - either acceptance or phenomenal cunning and patience.

The educational system those of us in positions of some power now serve is the same system that began to mold us at the tender age of five or even younger. Some of us who have moved up and into a more central position are probably the better, or more willing learners. Others of us - and I suspect the Bulletin is mainly read by this second kind - are less willing to accept the socialization process without at least an occasional question about its meaning and validity. We understand the words of Paulo Freire when he says

"Choice is illusory to the degree it represents the expectations of others" (p. 7). We are the ones always on the verge of losing our franchise. Yet, as evidenced by the fact that most of us are Caucus/NAEA members, we know - either consciously or instinctively - not to push too hard at the limits. We can exchange the pickles for the lettuce, or the mustard for the mayonaise, but we all know that if we try to slip a hot dog or a soy burger between those buns, we are going to lose our franchise.

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Cultural Knowledge: The Unrecognized Responsibility of Art Education

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Abstract

Art educators are a subgroup within the larger culture whose role it is to communicate information and skills in the visual arts for guiding individuals to find greater personal satisfaction in the visual arts, to gain knowledge of the visual arts as areas of specialized interest, and to become aware of the contribution the visual arts make to their cultural heritage. This paper proposes that the kinds of information that future art teachers gain while training in their specialized area fails to prepare them adequately for their role. A parallelism discovered in the work of cultural geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) and the recent work of cognitive psychologist, David Feldman (1980, 1984) suggests that different forces or domains of knowledge interact in ways that guide and direct the formation of ideas. In the following paper, the work of Tuan and Feldman are used as a basis for a greater understanding of the contradictory elements in the education and role expectancy of the art educator.

Cultural geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan (1974), states that an individual's ideas are influenced by cultural forces, personal interests, and by idiosyncratic qualities of personality. To demonstrate the influences on an individual's ideas, Tuan used landscape descriptions of the southwest written during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by travellers from Europe and the Atlantic seaboard. These descriptions expressed rejection for the sickening colors and the universal sameness of plains and mountains, plants and living things. For these individuals the southwest was desolate, offensive and without aesthetic merit. Descriptions of the southwest available from the folklore of the native Americans whose people had lived for centuries on the southwest plains show a totally different perception of the beauty, richness, and vitality of the majestic mountains and plains.

Art educators like other groups of people can be identified by their values and beliefs. Their behaviorial patterns are distinct within cultures. They own dual identities, one within their special province of art education and one with a respective cultural alliance. Though rooted in a culture, an

art educator's worldview becomes discipline oriented. Discipline knowledge becomes the tool and the criteria to address all sorts of issues whether within the province of the discipline or not.

Feldman (1980) has developed a theory that all knowledge can be divided into five cognitive domains. Though he is not specifically theorizing about the visual arts, Feldman's work makes the inevitability of the art educator's dual position more apparent. Aesthetic behavior is a form of valuing. It may be a personal value, a culture value, or both. On a personal level, aesthetic behavior is a means of projecting back to one's self and to others an image that can be matched or contrasted with an accepted cultural model. This model may be perceived subconsciously rather than self-consciously. Shared aesthetic values result from shared cultural experiences. Even when cross cultural similarities in aesthetic behaviour are found these are the result of special training, such as formal artistic study, or the result of cultural conditions which trigger the spontaneous development of similar responses to a particular circumstance.

Feldman's basic argument is for an extension of the field of developmental psychology into areas of cognition that address non-universal behavior. He believes that the energy spent by most of the people in the world most of the time is not in trying to reach universal goals (1980). For example, swimming does not meet developmental criteria and is not universal because it requires training and a special environment. Nevertheless, there is a sequential progression from lower to higher skills in swimming. Olympian level swimmers share similar knowledge regardless of their cultural background.

Traditional theory of cognitive development

Traditional theory defines four characteristics of developmental behavior. It is universal and spontaneous, requiring no special environment or intervention. All normal human environments have sufficient redundancy for universal goals to be achieved. Universal goals are achieved in an invariant sequence, a series of stages which cannot be missed, skipped, or retraced, and universal developmental behavior has hierarchical integration of lower

level cognition into the later systems of cognition.

Proposed theory of cognitive development

Feldman has proposed that many non-universal realms of human activity deserve the attention of cognitive psychologists because they have two of the four characteristics of universal learning. They are learned in invariant sequential order and the later levels of learning incorporate learning from earlier levels. He refers to these realms of activity as non-universal bodies of knowledge. Non-universal learning is not spontaneous and it does require special environments. At the most advanced levels, non-universal learning is achieved by progressively fewer individuals. Chess, more than swimming, displays the structure Feldman has set as the metaphor for non-universal learning. The levels of mastery for chess are so articulated that computers have been programmed to allow the selection of the appropriate skill level up to seven.

Knowledge domains in proposed theory

Feldman states bodies of knowledge can be classified into five groups. He refers to these as domains and has labeled them as unique knowledge, discipline-based knowledge, idiosyncratic knowledge, cultural knowledge and universal knowledge. Figure 1 illustrates the non-hierarchical structural relationship Feldman perceives between and among these groupings.

Figure 1. Feldman's Continuum of Knowledge Domains

UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE	CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE	DISCIPLINE-BASED KNOWLEDGE	IDIOSYNCRATIC KNOWLEDGE	UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE

Feldman also believes that through a process of evolution, knowledge which is presently perceived as universal may have originated with cases of unique knowledge which moved through the continuum of various domains to the point where the knowledge is spontaneously developed without special intervention. It is not possible to demonstrate the movement of cultural knowledge to universal knowledge, but in order to give a suggestion of the movement of an idea from unique knowledge to cultural knowledge, Le Corbusier's

purist's aesthetic might be taken as an example.

As history shows, a simplicity of form with uncluttered lines and flat planes is the kind of aesthetic Le Corbusier promoted for architecture. His idealized Ville Radieuse is the examplar from which multitudes of buildings have taken their form. His ideas were both unique and idiosyncratic for he shared beliefs with other early modernists. The theory generated by the ideas of these few individuals resulted in the International Style which has become the vernacular design of corporate architecture all over the world.

P. V. Turner writing about the education of Le Corbusier (1977) suggests that the monk's quarters for which Le Corbusier had a personal affinity could be described in terms similar to those used to describe the aesthetic of pure form that Corbusier and others pushed to represent the ideal machine aesthetic. At the ideological level, the machine aesthetic was meant to be revolutionary. In Russia (Ginsburg, 1970), the new aesthetic was promoted for palaces of the workers under the assumption that the peasants would want to totally reject the architecture and other trappings of the bourgeoisie. The forms of the new aesthetic were specifically determined by their ability to break with conventionalized architectural imagery as much as to represent the technology of the future.

Many influences set a favorable environment for the generation of the new architecture. Reconstruction and new construction were needed throughout Europe after World War I. Factories were needed for production. Factory workers needed housing. The war had made a world marketplace for the goods of technology. Technological knowledge was already available to meet construction needs in an efficient way. What was needed was an ideology to make these non-traditional forms acceptable in the culture. Ideas come from individuals and Corbusier and the other modernists had a unique concept of a pure architecture for a modern classless world. The need, the ability, and the concept all three worked together to incubate and gestate the idea of International Style. Of course, Corbusier did not do it alone. The environmental situation was right for the development of this ideology.

The idea of International Style rapidly moved through the layers of the architectural profession although it was never the exclusive architectural ideology that some think. It has since also passed through cultural levels to its present place as a symbol of international corporate identity. Some individuals choose it for reasons of personal taste; for the most part it has become an image of corporate architecture. Just as individuals can symbolize conventional church architecture across cultures, they can now identify an international image of corporate architecture.

Other applications of Feldman's model of knowledge domains

Feldman's phylogenetic model is helpful in seeing the relative positions of other art styles and movements. Some individual artists such as Norman Rockwell and Andrew Wyeth have received a wide cultural acceptance. They are understandable by most people at some level without special art discipline knowledge. The Impressionists also painted images that have become part of general cultural knowledge. The Impressionists represent an instance in which the idiosyncratic interests shared by a few artists resulted in a style that people have come to recognize and value for reasons many of which are unrelated to the intent of the creators. People do not necessarily see the same painting Monet saw, only the same canvas. On the other hand, Abstract Expressionism is understood by almost no one. Familiarity alone would not make it understandable. Many who value it have been taught misinformation by individuals within the discipline of art who have based their interpretations on the visual forms of the style. Even fewer would value it if the true information were known (Quick, 1977). A knowledge of Abstract Expressionism needs particular instruction not readily available to many individuals within a culture.

At the unique end of the continuum, the artistic expressions of most individuals are not intended for wide acceptance. Most people are not concerned with the creation or collection of objects which will be valued by a wide audience. Art for these individuals is not necessarily produced at a self-conscious level. Like folk and popular art, it is produced and used in the environment of values related to social and personal identity. However, because of the social value of this art, it may be taken up by individuals who

do have a self-conscious need to develop their art expression. For a very small number of individuals within the total culture, personal and social identity is integrated with artistic expression. They strive self-consciously to reach higher and higher levels of mastery. These individuals may ultimately contribute to art discipline knowledge. A case which might be taken as an example of this situation is Roy Lichenstein's self-conscious use of popular images translated into "Pop" art.

The relationship of environment to knowledge domains

Unlike universal knowledge wherein it is the invariant characteristics of environment that are essential, cultural knowledge, discipline-based knowledge, idiosyncratic knowledge and unique knowledge all vary in the degree and kind of environmental intervention required for their development. No one may choose whether or not to have universal knowledge. Neither does one have an option not to have cultural knowledge though the variety and level of cultural knowledge attained may vary. An argument could be made that cultural knowledge particularizes universal knowledge or that universal knowledge is manifested in cultural knowledge. For example, potentiality for language is considered universal by cognitive psychologists but language development is particularized by the culture. The same case can be made for culturally divergent systems of spatial perspective taking.

Since cultural knowledge is embedded in various symbol systems, artifacts, technology and cultural institutions, it is necessary that the cultural environment provide instruction in media skills such as reading, writing, computation, and drawing, in order to disembed information from its symbol source. Since some kinds of information are more easily acquired or expressed through one media rather than another, the attainment of media skills is more important than any specific content. Nevertheless, skill and content are generally integrated in the learning process. Uninstructed observation and imitation provide only a minimal amount of cultural understanding. A prolonged and systematic exposure is necessary for achieving the higher levels of cultural knowledge; therefore, most cultures provide a formal system of education.

The environment for discipline-based knowledge includes a cultural display of the opportunity and resources for specialized knowledge, although only a small - or even tiny - subset of the members of a culture will specialize in any one discipline. These are usually adults who have advanced to higher levels of knowledge in a special area through an intense period of instruction. This period of instruction compacts the acquisition of several levels of knowledge into a relatively short period of time. The skills and capabilities shared by the members of a discipline in one culture may overlap with those of the members of the same discipline in another culture. Specialization in any discipline is normally optional within a culture.

Although membership in a discipline is by choice, once chosen, it has an organizing effect on an individual's way of thinking; its distinctive mode of thinking is not restricted to problems which fall within the discipline itself. The discipline thus becomes an integrated part of a person's psychological environment. A behaviorial psychologist's world view or the world view of a symbolist artist will be affected by study in their respective disciplines.

Environmental conditions which are favorable for the development of idiosyncratic knowledge complement an individual's own intrinsic qualities. A prodigy is a special case of idiosyncratic achievement which takes place when the child's personal interest and abilities are ideally suited for achievement in some particular field of knowledge and the environment provides the necessary opportunity and instruction. This is why prodigies occur in families where a high level of discipline knowledge is available. Musical prodigies most often occur in families of musicians.

Contrary to opinion, prodigies spend long periods of time intensely studying their special discipline. The difference between them and an ordinary learner is the rate at which they master information in their particular area of interest. This allows them to reach the higher levels of attainment within a discipline at a time when others may still be diffuse in their goals.

Prodigies can be compared to those individuals at the advanced levels of a discipline who have developed a singular pre-eminence in a field. These experts represent the leadership in a field of knowledge. The environment

has made the opportunity available and provided the resources for them to develop their particular interests and abilities to a level not attained by most members of the discipline.

The environmental conditions for unique knowledge are set by the specific requirements of a problem. The development of a unique achievement can be paralleled with children advancing through the various stages of universal knowledge as they acquire knowledge already known by others. At the outer limits of knowledge in a particular field, an individual faced with the inability to resolve a problem with present knowledge creates new knowledge. It is not only new for him or her, as in the case of the child or the person who has not mastered all the already known levels, but it is new for everyone. This new knowledge then becomes part of the environment required to extend knowledge still further.

Cultural knowledge, discipline knowledge and art education

Art educators, like others who are discipline trained, have gained advanced levels of knowledge in a compressed period of time. Their specialized skills and capabilities place them in a tiny subgroup of any main stream culture. From the vantage point of their new knowledge, they recognize a distinction between what they have come to know and value because of their intense period of training and what most individuals within the culture perceive as art or value aesthetically. The educators perceive the chasm to be evidence of a compelling need to raise the level of knowledge within the main stream culture. They share an assumption that an individual's life and the general existence of society will be enhanced by visual knowledge as they have come to know it.

Wishing to raise the general level of art experience within the culture, art educators strive to develop students' ability to perceive images as they are seen by art experts - artists, historians, and critics. This goal is usually couched in more subtle terms such as nurturing aesthetic sensitivity, developing creative skills, and drawing from the field of art for curriculum content. The push to achieve recognition of art as a discipline and as a distinct body of knowledge is a reflection of the value art educators place

on the knowledge they have gained through discipline training. The content of their lessons, emphasizing elements and principles of design, art processes and media, and selected exemplars of aesthetic form, indicate the degree with which they are imbued with their own discipline knowledge as criteria for cultural knowledge.

Cultural knowledge is more diverse than discipline knowledge and because it is embedded in all manner of symbols, artifacts, and technologies, it requires the development of media skills for its continuous decoding and transmission. Reading verbal symbols is a media skill that allows access to diverse cultural knowledge embedded in inventories, novels, plays, company reports, local newspapers, and other written materials. What most members of a culture develop in the way of visual skills comes from untutored observation and imitation of people like themselves or those they aspire to be like. This is true of the homemaker shopping at Sears or the teenager wearing a single white glove in imitation of pop star Michael Jackson.

The use of cultural resources for the development of media skills can be expected to reinforce or reflect values already held by members of the culture. The computer has been accepted into the educational system because it enables the rapid collection, manipulation, communication, and storage of large amounts of information vital to cultural maintenance. Although visual decoding is a major means to access information including some computer output, study of the visual arts is not perceived as a broad based information processing skill. What is taught formally in the arts is content information. Attention to visual understanding is limited to decoding forms perceived to have significant aesthetic value.

Those who study to be art educators and other art professionals share a personal interest in and creative ability for art knowledge that is not characteristic of the respective cultural groups, although general cultural support for the visual arts may vary from place to place or time to time. For art educators, who as a group are distinctly more socially oriented than other art professionals (Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi, 1976), this personal interest and ability in art and its value for personal development

is projected on other members of the larger cultural group. Characteristic of this stance is the development of slogans like "art for self expression" and "art in the mainstream" to inform and to focus the arts in the direction perceived to be consistent with currently expressed cultural values. It may be said the urge to proselytize art knowledge for social good is idiosyncratic to the art educator.

The slogans change but what is actually taught in the schools under the aegis of art instruction has changed imperceptibly. Several reasons related to the preparation of art teachers make this inevitable. The model for the art teacher is primarily the studio artist. Because of their own inclination to work with art media and processes, future art teachers easily identify with this model. Narrowly educated themselves, studio teachers reinforce the separateness of art from other life experiences. Art is their life. They believe that the making of art is morally elevating. Generally committed to Modernism and its philosophy of social engineering, they believe art makes better people. It is only those who are less sensitive, more commercial, materialistic or generally inferior who are incapable of being transformed by art. These individuals in the eyes of the professional studio artist, do not deserve the attention of the studio teacher. The limited attention to art historical information provided for all art educators generally results in emphasis on the fine arts, realism, the Renaissance tradition, and the Avant' Garde of the twentieth century. What most future art teachers learn is a narrow and prescriptive kind of discipline-based knowledge.

In an effort to assure that these prescribed attitudes are enculturated through art experiences, art educators have not recognized the interrelational aspects of all cultural knowledge. Art teachers have tried to teach cultural knowledge of art with the discipline models to which they have been exposed. Children and future adults need experience in decoding cultural knowledge of art. The study of their own art and the art most familiar to them, whatever its cultural level, is important for children if they are to develop an understanding that art has meaning and value which is reflected in the attention and care it receives by the person who produced it or by others who have

similar interests, ideas, or beliefs. By asking questions, teachers of art can help students think about the purposes of art and the role of the artist in various cultural and subcultural groups. Their questions would include who is an artist? Is it hard to be an artist? What kinds of things are art? Why do some things have more value than others? Who decides what is valuable? Where do artists get their ideas? What role does the audience play? Who is the intended audience? Teaching art as a cultural knowledge allows children to learn about themselves through the medium of art and guides their ability to read cultural artifacts for an understanding of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of a cultural group. To help children and future adults understand how cultural knowledge is related to everyday activities and interests, teachers of art would need to have knowledge of the visual arts familiar to those they teach such as the movies, comics, and television. They also need to understand the literature, sports and other forms of play and work in which the student participates. Most importantly, they need to understand the cultural environment - the homes, streets, and neighborhoods in which the students' activities take place.

It is not the primary function of public education to make better people in the sense of social strata or morality. Rather, its function is to better equip them to deal with the world in a useful and pleasurable manner. Art teaching does allow people some enjoyment in the manipulation of art media for whatever purpose. The study of art also makes some people aware of their own interests, abilities, and appreciation of art regardless of how narrowly art forms are interpreted. For art knowledge to serve as a decoding system for cultural knowledge, art teaching must be directed toward the understanding of visual forms as carriers of cultural knowledge. Individuals need to be better able to organize information visually.

The various forces or knowledge domains as suggested by Tuan and Feldman provide an interpretive basis for the contradiction that seems to function between the education and the role expectancy of the art educator. Art educators come from a tiny sub-group of the total culture by virtue of their particular idiosyncratic aptitude and skill with art media. They are taught

to become even more estranged from any cultural context by the kinds of knowledge they gain from discipline training. The limited exposure to art in a context other than studio does little to eliminate the narrowness of their interests.

Often, art educators were children who discovered that they liked making art so they went to college to study making art. Somewhere along the way the issue of making a living caused them to make the decision to become art teachers. Many really know little about art in a broad sense. They mostly know some things about particular media. When they begin to teach, they find that what they have learned to value as art knowledge is poorly related to what children learn in the contexts of their various cultural and sub-cultural groups. Most art educators take this discrepancy as evidence of a need for greater cultural resources to bring cultural art knowledge to a level consistent with that of the discipline rather than as an indication of the narrowness of their own background. Another interpretation, the one proposed by this paper, is that the discipline education of art educators is a disservice for the future art educator for as it exists, it is ineffectual for decoding cultural knowledge. A culturally contextual, culturally cognizant approach to art education would recognize the significance of learning to disembed cultural knowledge from visual forms at all levels. Learning to use visual skills makes cultural knowledge more accessible. Acquiring a particular point of view about art that is shared by a relatively few members of a culture does not make one cultured.

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Art As a Social Study: Theory Into Practice

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Abstract

The concept of dialogue is one that is rarely applied in art education. The attitude prevails that teachers of art know what is best, that students are ignorant of "real" art, that student aesthetic experiences are trivial or worthless, and so they, the teachers, settle for a curriculum and teaching approach that reaches less than 5% of the students. The remaining 95% plus are regimented in activities less meaningful than Trivia Pursuit or are ignored altogether. Dialogue is not one sided. For knowledge to take place, the learner must have access to meaning and meaning can not be handed down like so much information. Knowledge results from dialogue; it is not a possession to be bestowed on others.

In a dialogue, the sender must receive feedback affirming that the message received was the message sent. The receiver is responsible for this feedback at whatever level and in whatever context the message was received. The receiver then becomes the sender for the feedback is now the new message. Unless the original message has meaning in context to the receiver, the feedback is without meaning. A parroted response does not indicate that the receiver has translated information into knowledge.

In the following paper, the problem of dialogue in elementary and secondary art programs is addressed. The position argued is that changes can be made. Ritualistic, rule-governed "School Art" at the elementary level and fine art oriented studio processes and dogmatic aesthetic exemplars at the secondary level will yield to teachers who care about children, their world, their art, and their learning.

Let me give an example of a different approach in the art room. One that approximates dialogue. In British Columbia a teacher is working with a group of eighth graders. She has been looking at the provincial curriculum guide and plans some image development lessons around such strategies such as juxtaposition, distortion, viewpoint, magnification, imagination, and visualization. Among other things, the guide suggests that the teacher might use Claes Oldenburg to show that grouping or placing unlikely images creates a feeling of humour and surprise. The guide suggests that students might split and rearrange photographic images; observe and record images seen in

reflective surfaces such as kettles, bumpers, and doorknobs; study the work of Salvador Dali or M. C. Escher; use a worm's eye view; discuss surrealism; view Walt Disney's Fantasia; or imagine and record dream landscapes. Certainly there are some good things in the guide, but they represent things that the teacher is supposed to know about in order to teach kids. What about things that the kids know about? We pay lip service to, and research (Rump and Southgate, 1978) supports the notion that, in order to be a successful teacher, one needs to understand and probably use the means of communication current in the culture in which the teacher is operating. Usually this has meant spoken language, and sometimes, but not often, we have felt a need to understand the non-verbal communication of special and not-so-special learners. In the 1960's we began to realize that first grade urban North American and other children who reads words such as "Dick," "Jane," "Spot," "Mother," "Father," at school could also read and spell words such as "Buick," "Thunderbird," Colgate's," "Pepsi-Cola," "Marlboro," "Pall Mall," "Chicklets," "Yankees," "Giants," "Mohammad Ali," "parking," "trespassing," "smoking," "love," "kill," "shit," and other four letter words (Kohl, 1972). Surely the same is true with visual images. Can there be dialogue? I think that there can. Rock videos, for example, contain outstanding visual material illustrating the use of juxta-position, distortion, viewpoint, magnification, and other visual devices and image development strategies that our B. C. teacher wanted her students to employ. My own opinion of videos has been influenced by the research of one of my graduate students who worked the switchboard when teenagers and others called a local T.V. station to give their rock video preferences. The student's research indicated that in terms of the final evaluation, the image seen by teenagers is more important than the music. Our students can teach us, they can enter into a dialogue about the imagery of their own world and and can tell us how it is done. We should explore their world, they should explore ours.

In a 1969 article titled "Adolescence and the Apocalypse" the following was written:

> What fascinates me is that our public schools, designed for adolescents....educate and "socialize" their students

> by depriving them of everything the rites bestow. They manipulate them through the repression of energies; they isolate them and close off most parts of the community; they categorically refuse to make use of the individual's private (and social) experience. The direction of all these tendencies is toward a cultural "schizophrenia" in which the student is forced to choose between his own relation to reality or the one demanded by the institution. The schools are organized to weaken the student so that he is forced, in the absence of his own energies, to accept the values and demands of the institution. To this end we deprive the student of mobility and experience; through law and custom we make the only legal place for him - the school - and then, to make sure he remains dependent, manipulable, we empty the school of all vivid life (Marin pp. 47-49).

It is important that art teachers acknowledge popular culture. It is regrettable that the last three issues of the Journal of Popular Culture were probably ignored not just by those teaching art in the schools, but also by the majority of university art educators. In its recent concern with architecture, rock music, political themes in contemporary comic books, video games, Japanese popular culture, van art, television, perspectives for understanding material culture, and greeting cards, this publication deserves more, much more, of our collective attention.

This summer I taught in Saskatoon, where there is a wonderful art gallery, "The Mendel." But despite this it seemed to me that the art that really mattered to most residents of Saskatoon could be found in the record stores on Third Avenue, Bourassa's Religious Supplies, in the shopping malls, and various "gift" shops. If we are going to use the art that matters to the kids we teach when we deal with "imagery" or "the elements and principles of design," then we need to enter into a dialogue to find out what this art is. I have the students in

my secondary art education methods class and in my graduate seminar in the social and cultural foundations of art education read a paper "The Uses of Art," by a British art educator, Colin Painter (Aspects 18, Spring, 1982). Mr. Painter is the head of the School of Creative and Performing Arts at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic. He sent his paper to me after discovering my paper "Art education as ethnology," (Chalmers, 1981). Painter did what my paper talked about doing, he conducted a survey to classify the objects and visual images that people in different socio-economic groups hung on the walls of their homes. He also looked at the meanings that these objects had for their owners in relation to their values and ways of life. He was interested in how objects were introduced into the house, why they are liked, how long ago they were acquired, and at what cost. Painter cautions against drawing large generalizations and conclusions from his study, but his survey does provide some observations.

The survey indicated a plurality of audiences apparently corresponding to differences in socio-economic circumstances. The audiences also divided along lines of what plurality of images and objects were to be classified as visual art. Substantial differences were found in people's relationship to the art world concept of art. Working class subjects (while acknowledging the existence and authority of art) tended not to put their own possessions in that category, whereas middle class subjects tended to do so. Perhaps, to designate objects as art is not only to confer status and value, but also indicates a willingness to participate in the culture. In this context, the preponderance of a functional (more significantly, a pseudo-functional) dimension in objects performing a largely visual role in the working class homes is particularly interesting. It would seem likely that this attitude originated in earlier traditions of working class life and domestic circumstances. It is possible to speculate that the reference to practical utility is unconsciously valued precisely because it actually disqualifies an object from being seen as fine art. In this manner possible accusations of pretentiousness are averted and perhaps denial of collaboration with an alien and hostile culture are reinforced.

Painter goes on to speculate that if such conjectures are valid, there are still many objects in working class homes of Newcastle which clearly allude to the high culture of fine art such as signatures, gold frames, swords and shields. He did find, however, that even in the middle class homes, works from the contemporary fine arts world were rare. He felt that this showed a considerable disjunction between the concepts of art held in the middle class homes and those prevalent in the specialist art world. The survey also indicated that, for working class people in particular, visual images are an integral part of their family and community life. These images are largely valued for their associational contexts (particularly personal, family, and community relationships) as distinct from being valued for their intrinsic qualities alone. Painter concludes his paper by stating that this would seem to be in stark contrast to many dominant attitudes in the contemporary art world.

As the result of reading Painter's paper, an elementary teacher in my class decided to do a survey of her own students. She developed the following format:

Pick one thing in your house that you think is art, and answer all the questions using just that one thing.

What is the art object you picked?

In what country was it made? (Look on the back or the bottom, guess if you aren't sure.)

How did it come to be in your house?

How long has it been in your family?

Who in your house likes it best?

Why does that person like it? If you aren't the person who likes it best, do you like it? Yes? No? Why?

If you had to move into a smaller place and couldn't take everything with you, would you take this object with you?

Give me your reasons why you think its art?

Without putting an actual price on the object, would you say that the object is not worth much money at all?
not very expensive?
reasonably expensive?
worth a lot of money?

Does the object have any special significance of worth to your family?

Describe the object for me. Make a drawing if you can.

Another student did a similar study with twenty members of the teaching staff at her school, another with eighth and ninth grade students, another made a survey of things on the walls in principals' offices, and another surveyed school hallway art in elementary schools in the east and west sides of the city in which she taught. In this last study, the student found that the culture of school art was so strong that differences were minimal despite very significant economic and ethnic differences in the student populations. The point is that we art educators need to attend to the values prevalent in the environments from which students come. Some may see this approach as merely a strategy to engage the interests of students enroute to the achievement of so-called more worthy aims. There will also be those who are content to perpetuate school art for a variety of reasons. But surely there will be those who want to engage in genuine dialogue and to include the study of all art, and particularly the study of the why aspects of art.

Artistic understanding takes place within a cultural context. In a pluralist culture we need to be concerned with the meaning of art for a variety of viewers and cultural participators. In more and more places people seem to be living their lives without the need to be exposed to honored aesthetic exemplars. They have become what we might call "artistically secularized." The study of art as a social study must address such questions as: How does society influence what individuals and groups perceive as art? Do people find different meanings in the same visual art objects? How do members of different groups determine their standards for judging art forms? We in art education need to do more to recognize the significance of the role of art

as a social phenomena and we need to learn to ask questions such as these proposed for a social studies class: What can be learned from the work about the level of economic and technological development of the artist's society? Judging from the materials and craftmanship, what economic resources and technological expertise did the society place at the disposition of the artist? If, as a piece of art, the work appears primarily decorative, what additional uses might it have had in the lives of its original users? Was it functional, like furniture and architecture, or a status symbol, or both? Did it preserve the memory of some important event or person? Do its decorative aspects make it less functional? Was the work produced with some specific public in mind? What clues does the work give about the identity of its audience? Can this audience be identified as a social class, institution (e.g., the Church), or some other segment of society? Why was the subject important enough to be portrayed in art? What does the work tell us about the interests, preoccupations, and values of its sponsors? How might its style and subject appeal to them? Have other artists used this theme or subject for different purposes? Would a member of this original audience likely feel that the work reinforced or criticized accepted social values? Does the work communicate the personal viewpoint of the artist or the viewpoint of the society? Was the work first received well? Did various segments of the public have different reactions? How have later periods reacted to this work? Has it ever fallen into disfavour or neglect? What feeling does the work produce in viewers today? (Carr, 1983).

Moffat (1969), an art historian, devised a similar checklist for looking at works of art. His questions could be used to examine spray painted panel vans, Billy Idol, or Duran Duran posters. They apply equally to paintings in shopping malls, hallway decoration, motel art, rock videos, and clothing.

Moffat's checklist has two major categories, content and environment. Content includes the idea expressed, the form, and the image as the vehicle to express the idea. The sub-categories are:

(a) The aesthetic response
(Why do you like or dislike it?)

(b) Characterization
(How does the artist achieve this quality?)

(c) Materials

(d) Specific form
(Use of space, texture, and mass)

(e) Color

(f) Composition

Environment includes historical background and comprehension, sense of period. The sub-categories are:

(a) The artist's art historical placement

(b) Cultural background
(National or ethnic characteristics; philosophic or religious currents; and physical, social, political, and economic contexts)

(c) Interpretive keys
(Contemporary documents as collaboration with consideration given to the "distorting mirror" of history.)

We need to make it abundantly clear that the art of a culture (including its popular forms) not only expresses the available tools, materials, and technology, it also shows the values of that culture. Art derives from the environmental, psychological, and historical components of human existence. By isolating art from social factors, we isolate it from life. We need to discuss with students the role and function of the arts in society, and we might start with dialogue about the visual forms found in the student's own bedroom. For example, among a tenth grade class we found the following:

a pottery bunny,
Teddy bears,
Doddle art,
Animals from rocks,
a drawing of a bunny rabbit,
a 1920 Vanity cover,
Pictures of dogs, cats, and a monkey,
Pictures of hockey teams,

Bike posters,
Posters of John Stamos, Matt Dillon, Tom Cruise, Rob Lowe,
Posters of Billy Idol, Duran Duran, Clash, Sexpistols, Cindy Lauper,
String pictures,
Photographs,
a charging bull poster,
a landscape painting,
Small figurines,
an Oil painting of a mountain, stream, and trees,
Model cars and planes,
Drawings done by the student of a fawn and a cat's face,
Print from Hong Kong,
Beer and girl posters,
a woodcarving of a polar bear,
Posters of Madness, seagulls,
a brass sculpture of a horse,
a black velvet painting of a dog and a cat,
a pictures of Paris,
Hoffman's "Image of Christ,"
a Cross on the wall,
a Statue of the Virgin Mary,
Student paintings and drawings,
an Artex moonlight scene
Hummel gifts,
a Photo of Ezra Pound
a Black light poster,
Trophies and pennants,
a black velvet painting of a unicorn,
Sculptures of Arabians and Clydesdales,
a watercolor of flowers done by student's sister.

When kids were asked <u>why</u> they had these things, we find in their answers the starting points for tremendous and rich dialogue on the function and role of

art in society. The following give an indication of their answers:

Just for decoration.

Some are up so people who gave them won't be hurt.

I like my self-portrait best -- I'm really proud of how good it is.

Everything is tied up with my family and religion.

My parents like them.

My parents loved my nephew and he died, they feel close with the picture.

Pictures of our homeland remind us of the people we left behind.

I love animals.

I don't know.

Right now I just value my stereo.

I just love all the posters in my room, I'd never give any away.

Everything has been passed down from generation to generation.

My friends are jealous of my posters.

In summary, let's listen more. Let's use exemplars that kids can understand -- not just to illustrate points that have to do with them developing images and learning about the elements and principles of design, but also to help us all learn about the function and role of art in society.

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Thought on Social Contextualism in Art and Art Education

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Abstract

Art as a manifestation and reflection of culture has been clearly established. Discussions of various depth on the subject are available in many general art education texts (Chapman, 1978; Feldman, 1970; McFee, 1970, McFee and Degge, 1977). However, the concept of art as a reflection of culture may take many forms and thus has the potential for ambiguity.

Culture, as defined by the social sciences, is the complex of knowledge, beliefs, mores, customs, laws, and social institutions held by human beings as a part of society. Culture, in this sense, does not refer to what is commonly known as high culture, except as high culture is included in the larger complex defined above. Thus, art as a reflection of culture does not refer to the state of understanding, appreciating, and collecting art as a manifestation of good taste, aesthetic education, social position, or wealth. Rather, it refers to the mirroring of the human condition as this condition is formed through its social institutions.

Art when broadly viewed as a reflection of culture creates opportunities to understand our world, to understand oneself, and to understand the qualities inherent in an artwork. A socially defined art curriculum can serve as a catalyst for the development of students' sensibilities. This requirement is most fully met when all aspects of making, talking about, and appreciating art are incorporated into an organically structured integrally related program.

Artworks mirror the culture of a society not necessarily because artists set out to illuminate social concerns, but simply because artworks reflect the specific concerns of the artists who produced them. Artists, like other people, live in a largely socially-defined environment. Each artist interacts within and interprets his society in a unique fashion. Thus, each will perceive and interpret reality differently than any other artist. However, this does not alter the fact that every individual artist's personal development has taken place in a specific place and at a specific time, and therefore is subject to the customs, mores, and institutions which are the modus

operandi of that place and time. The artist's point of view cannot be separated from the context of its formation. The expression of that point of view, no matter what is propagated, referred to, or even denied, in illuminating the artist's position, also illuminates aspects of the culture which helped to define the artist.

It follows, then, that the varying concerns of individual artists will reflect a cross-section of the concerns of a society. Through examining artworks with an underlying concern for the cultural and societal nature of their genesis, one may gain significant insight not only about art, but about the nature of the society from which it arose. For example, if one were to critically examine the works of the contemporary American artists Andy Warhol, Frank Stella and muralist William Walker one would find vastly different visions of reality represented. In critically examining their works one would also find that each of the artists exhibits an internal verity in his or her works. That is, each of the artists understands and utilizes what Dewey (1985) would call a pervasive quality or unifying emotive element which mandates form. Thus one must assume that the differences in form between the three artists are not qualitative in nature. Each has exhibited a unifying sensibility and the technical and formal expertise to validate that sensibility. Differences in form, then, must be attributed to the different sensibilities of the artists - sensibilities which reflect varying points of view in relation to the larger culture. The work of each artist represents a point of view honed within the context of American society. Together, they reflect a more complete image of American culture than any one of them alone. Yet each of them reflects some individual aspect of the contemporary American sensibility, and removed from the social context, each work loses much of its potential meaning.

It is ironic, then, that the modern approach to viewing art tends to remove the artwork from the context of its making and formally intellectualize its content. This process of formal intellectualization is encouraged by the gallery and museum system, and by the reproduction of artworks together in art history, art appreciation, and like volumes. In Voices of Silence, Malraux

(1953) describes how the separation of art from the context of its making is a very recent phenomenon, corresponding with the rise of the art museums two hundred years ago. Indeed, the idea that art is an entity complete unto itself and separate from any other function - an idea taken for granted by many artists and critics today - was unknown before the advent of museums. How is it that both museums and volumes of art reproductions, which aim to disseminate art to the widest possible population, are also responsible for diluting art's power through formal intellectualization? How does this disolution of power function, arising as it does from an apparently honest attempt simply to disseminate images?

The proximity of one artwork to another in both the museum and the book of reproductions gives the unwary perceiver a false impression of connectedness between works rather than emphasizing the more natural connection between the artwork and the context of its making. The human perception and interpretation process naturally follows a pattern of connection making, the underlying aim being catagorization, with the end goal of understanding the world and one's place in it. This has been necessary not only for intellectual advancement, but for survival, and so is deeply ingrained. Thus, because of a propensity for making connections in order to make sense of things, one assumes all components included in a frame are part of the piece - that they are all related. When artworks are displayed or reproduced together the natural human quest for meaning takes the most accessible path - comparison and contrast. In the absence of the artwork's formative context the quest for meaning is referred to an examination of a work's formal qualities. What is lost in this process of formal intellectualization is the social meaning of the artwork as the work arose and functioned in the context of its making. Removed, either physically or intellectually, from the social context, an artwork loses a substantial part of its raison d' etre - the illumination of the human condition.

None of the foregoing should be thought to imply that aesthetic concerns should be eliminated from the examination of art. It is, after all, the aesthetic component which differentiates art from anthropology, sociology, history, psychology and the other humanistic disciplines. But rather than

considering formal qualities as ends in themselves, it seems more productive to analyze style in an artwork as a conduit of deeper meaning. Feldman (1967) states that style

> leads us to look for meaning beneath the subject matter and apparent purpose of a work of art. Just as handwriting conveys meanings which are not in the words alone, style reveals much about an artist's way of thinking, about his environment, and about the society and culture in which his work is rooted. Archaeologists use style to reconstruct past cultures. They put pieces of stylistic evidence together like a mosaic, to form an idea of culture or civilization as a whole. Similarly, we study the styles of art - to assemble in our minds an idea of the changing condition of man. (p. 130)

Thus, it becomes apparent that the aesthetic quality - the formal makeup and the style of an artwork - is crucial to its overall significance and meaning; but the consideration of formal qualities divorced from culturally contextual concerns inevitably leads the viewer to an incomplete or even false understanding of the work. Judgments will be incomplete or false to the extent they are based on incomplete or faulty information. As stated by Chapman (1979), "There is a direct relationship between visual forms and social values; indeed, a judgment of one implies a judgment of the other" (p. 109).

In addition to the process of formal intellectualization, a second factor tends to separate the modern viewer from an awareness of the artwork as a reflection of culture. This factor resides in the fact that the contemporary approach to making and viewing art is overwhelmingly psychological, and thus, individually oriented. Feldman (1967) states: "In the modern world this personal function of art may seem to constitute the very essence of art for artist and viewer" (p. 17). This propensity may be directly linked to modern art's general separation from any socially instrumentalist function.

The separation of art from direct social functions is uniquely a product of modern times and western culture. Traditionally, the personal psychological component of the artwork was subservient to the social component in determining

the final aesthetic form. Primitive man used art as a form of magic to insure the success of the hunt. Ancient Egyptian artists were employed to develop images of servants and goods meant to serve the pharoahs in their afterlives. The pope and the Medicis employed Italian artists to promulgate their religious and political ends. But with the demise of the social directive came the rise of the personal as the primary mode in making and viewing art.

It is often expressed that the rise of personal and idiosyncratic aesthetic expression negates the validity of art as a reflection of culture. In countering this view, however, one must simply understand that the contemporary emphasis on personal creativity is a tacitly or even expressly agreed upon social premise. Individuals who make works of art do not live in a social vacuum. If the emphasis in art today is on personal expression, it is surely a result of a socially agreed upon manner of behaving. Personal, even idiosyncratic, pre-eminence within works of art signifies not a lack of social context in their making, but rather, a socially agreed upon acceptance of personal expression as culturally predominant in this society at this time.

General Implications for Teaching Art

A major function of education is the transmission of culture. It is the experience, beliefs, and knowledge of the eons of generations which have come before us which separate us as a species from all others on this planet. Unlike the other animals, who transmit only the most rudimentary information from generation to generation, we do not have to start over, discovering knowledge anew with each lifetime. Through our records we can draw on the accumulative human wisdom of the ages. Art, as one of these records, is the aesthetically framed transmission of human experience. Art serves as a record of culture in a way that is often inaccessible to language; for while language generally tells what has happened, art addresses the issue of how that phenomenon appeared and felt, in context (Langer, 1958). Anthropologists have long understood this and have examined artworks as a matter of course, along with other societal artifacts, in order to come to an understanding of past societies.

The most obvious implication for the art teacher, whether one's specialty be studio art, art criticism and theory, or art history, is to consciously incorporate a cultural perspective on art into the curriculum. This would entail helping students to become aware of artworks as culturally symbolic and socially definitive in all their aspects. Like the anthropologist, the art teacher should develop and transmit to students a consciousness of the artwork as an artifact reflective of social conditions. The art teacher should also make students aware that the students' personal development and the process of making thoughts and feelings concrete has a social and cultural validity that justifies their expression. In short, an understanding of the social context of the processes and products of art could and should be made intrinsic, at the conscious rather than subliminal level, in all phases of making and perceiving art.

The incorporation of a socially defined art curriculum necessarily mandates a strong experiential component when making and perceiving contemporary art. Students must draw upon their own experiences to define and validate the forms they make, as well as to interpret the forms they see. This experiential component must, of course, be supplemented, defined, and put in context by the introduction of experiences and forms from the larger artistic and social context. These experiences and forms might consist of written records, including fiction and poetry, as well as non-fictional description; supporting visual materials; or even oral substantiation drawn from personal or vicarious experience. The teacher's role, in addition to the introduction of these materials is one of prompting, questioning (about forms, processes, motives, connections, meanings...), and constructive criticism and feedback.

If artworks being perceived are from a time or culture different than the students', the examination of the culture will have to come largely from the written record or through vicarious experience from people who have experienced the culture. Although this condition is not experientially ideal, at least it will make the student aware that a cultural context does exist in connection with an image. Undoubtedly, knowledge of that context will increase understanding, thus appreciation, of the work being examined. For a

more total contextual experience, the art teacher might develop a unit around the understanding of cross-cultural images. This approach to art is an exercise not only in the formal qualities of design, but in cultural literacy.

Another way a teacher might approach cultural literacy through the teaching of art is to use communally significant current events and manifestations of contemporary culture as motivational stimuli for both studio and appreciative assignments. While this may, at first, appear to be simply an elaboration of the old holiday art syndrome, there is a qualitative difference in the context of socially defined curriculum. That difference arises from the students' examination and understanding of the social significance of the event or phenomenon being treated. These communally meaningful phenomena which serve to stimulate art need not be national or international holidays such as Christmas or the Fourth of July. They may just as well be locally specific. Every community has its own significant local events. Most people in a given community have at least a passing interest in the football team going to the state championship tournament, or in the local rodeo, crab racing contest, or opera season. These are the sort of communally meaningful events which not only can be addressed by the art program, but which will bring that program from a peripheral into a central position in the community's life and consciousness.

Thus, in terms of curriculum design, the mandate of the socially defined approach is two-fold. First, art teachers must make themselves aware of the cultural values embedded in visual images and pass this knowledge on to their students. This does not mean that teachers must be aware of all facets and subtleties of the pluralistic American culture, and of all cultures, through all of time. What it does mean is that teachers should be aware that cultural embedding exists and is present in all artworks. Ascertaining meaning cannot begin until there is a conscious knowledge of its existence. Class assignments should be devised with a consciousness of the fact that both content and style reflect social beliefs and values. From this concern arises the second facet of the socially-defined mandate - that

content be considered as integral to the visual form as style. This premise mandates that the teaching of formal elements and principles of design as an end in themselves, and for their own sake, be abandoned. Rather it requires that these tools of style serve some function beyond formal excellence disassociated with other meaning. This is not to deny formalism, because formalism is a statement of values. It is a recognition that students must be taught what the values of pure form and color are, beyond the fact that they are form and color. In teaching only form and color for their own sake the potential for art content is lost. The potential for the added dimension of deeper meaning in art lies in a full realization of art content, whether that be figurative, abstract, or non-objective. That content, which reflects the mores, values, and identity of a group and/or society must be consciously examined within the socially-defined curriculum.

Conclusions

There can be little doubt that art is, indeed, a reflection of culture. It has been established that artworks take on points of view in relation to the social conditions, media, and individual concerns of the context from which they arise. That Larry Rivers' and Rembrandt's styles did not develop together in South America in the 1850's is no accident. (Art styles and the values which determine art content do not magically appear as gifts from the art gods, but are the result of an interaction between an individual and the individual's cultural milieu. Aesthetic forms reflect the cultural content of their origin.)

Thus, it has also been determined that the qualities of an artwork may only be ascertained within the context of its making and in relation to the criteria it sets for itself. To the extent that artworks are approached from outside their context, or with incomplete information, or with a comparative and evaluative attitude, the experience of viewing or making art will be incomplete and/or fallacious.

It has been argued that as a reflection of culture - as a way of understanding our world - art should be used not as an end in itself, but as a catalyst for the development of students' sensibilities. It should be used to promote personal development and an understanding of individual

students' places in the larger cultural context. This does not negate the quest for aesthetic excellence in art, but simply gives added dimension and meaning to forms and media from both the making and perceiving ends.

It has also been argued that a socially defined art curriculum may be utilized in all the traditional aspects of an art program: studio, art history, and theory and criticism. Indeed, it should be emphasized that a socially defined curriculum functions best when it incorporates all aspects of making, talking about, and appreciating art into an organically structured, integrally related program.

The end goal of the socially defined art curriculum is the understanding of human nature - oneself included - in the societal context, through the processes of making, examining, and talking about art. It is through values that humanity defines itself and separates itself from the other creatures of the earth. It is our cultures, passed on from generation, which make human social and technological evolution possible. And it is the arts which personify the values and ultimately define a culture, a people, and humanity. The end result of a socially defined art curriculum dispells the myth of art as an extra, art as superficial, art as mere adornment. Within a socially defined context art takes its rightful place as a primary means of human expression. In this context, art is revitalized through consciously realized connections with the vital events of the society. When socially defined, it becomes apparent that art cannot be separate from life.

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Art Education in Social Context

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Abstract

Discourse about art, like other discourse, contains limits as well as possibilities for creating meaning about human experience. The following essay raises a series of questions about the difference between the discourse of most art education, and the discourse of contemporary art critics and artists. Why are these subcultures of the art world different, and what is the significance of their separation? Is art education systematically losing its capacity to make contact at the level of human experience? Has it alienated itself from larger social concerns? These issues are explored through general review of art education discourse and through the specific example of photography study in art education and art criticism.

The language used to talk about art is like a door both because it opens up some realms of meaning and because it shuts off others. Formalist criticism, for example, traces the contours of a world of expressive meaning, but keep the social context of meaning hidden from view. Wittgenstein (1963) encouraged us to see that language contained words, like the word "game," the meaning of which depends on the particular game being played.

It requires only a short leap of the imagination to see the significance of language games in a social context. Different social groups engage in different games, and are thereby possibly separated from the meaning-worlds of other groups. Nowhere is this more of an actual social condition than in art. From the rituals and crafts of village society to the popular expressionism of suburbia, and from the conventions of commercial illustration to the criticism of Modernism and Post-Modernism, discourse in art is characterized by the existence of numerous distinct art meanings reflecting the diversity of subcultures. The art meaning of each subculture is complete with its own values, criteria, and exemplars of "good art." Each subculture has its own rules for how to play its art game, either by unspoken admiration, by the use of appropriate catch-phrases ("lovely," "creative," "matches the couch"), through art fairs and gallery shows, or by inquiry into the criteria

of aesthetic value.

The concept of "game" as used here is of course a cynical one, as it suggests that our inquiries into art are "only a game," an aesthetically coherent preoccupation that lacks convincing connection to the real substance of life itself. In this cynical view it would be nonsense to say that one game is better than another -- that the investigations of the Post-Modernist sculptor are more important than those of the amateur portrait painter, for example. If each game is equally coherent and each systematically relates procedures and products to meanings, then each is an equally satisfactory occupation for the subculture that chooses to play that game.

But the cynical view is extreme. Games not only take us in circles, but also take us through the circle of the game into a level of meaning that is emotional or social. In sports, for example: football takes us to militarism, long distance running to a consciousness consuming trance, archery to its celebrated zen awareness. To appreciate LeRoy Nieman's computer generated football illustrations is simply to get in touch with the same kinds of meanings as are obtainable from televised football itself: homage to the brutal, raw, garishly colorful and totally conventionalized.

The referents of art games are to be found in the life-world itself. Through aesthetic games each subculture reaches into those core emotions and social attitudes that guide the wider arena of life decisions and life actions. The reason why the mutual exclusion of artistic subcultures matters is not an elitist fear that the wider public will miss out on a more cultivated aesthetic, but a pluralist's desire to make available those comprehensions of reality to which more adequate art meanings open the door. "World views," Panofsky (1955) told us, are the content of art. Different art games present the world views of voyeurs or activists, idolators or skeptics, wardens or liberators, killers or saints. World views provide critical choices that makes boundaries of discourse more than a sociological curiosity.

It is only within this century that public education has systematically sought to make the artistic discourse of the avant-garde available to the wider public. Today we have become used to the educator's efforts to disseminate high culture, and to create a homogenized respect for Picasso or

Pollock in the schools. In the nineteenth century, however, this was not the case. Art education was founded amidst the same contradictions that weighed down all aspects of the new egalitarianism in North America, a contradiction between democratic rhetoric and oppressive practice. While the Impressionists were opening the boundaries of sensory experience, art lessons in Boston consisted of copying mechanical design patterns. While Picasso and Braque were inventing Cubist space suited to twentieth century expression, school girls in New York were memorizing the moral lessons of selected genre paintings from the eighteenth century. Most of art education was not yet about either art or free inquiry, but about an acceptance of the industrial world and the right kind of moral character.

Earlier in this century a new cadre of art educators worked for a closer involvement of the public with contemporary movements in art. Two movements in the art world spurred these educators' hopes that a much closer rapport between art and public involvement with art was possible. Expressionism and the design movement, as exemplified by the Bauhaus, were each seen as movements away from the esoteric and towards a pre-existing consensus of popular aesthetics. Expressionism found itself compatible with an especially wide consensus of interests: the expressive forms of non-Western sculpture, the theories of unconscious exaggerations and deviations of form put forth by Freud and Jung, and the art of young children. Artists, psychologists, and educators each recognized this consensus and each group was electrified by it. For educators the consensus both confirmed the importance of "free self-expression" by children, and linked children's art closely to the highest concerns of the art world. Children in school and artists in society were seen to be linked not by special tutoring available to the few but by something universally innate.

Whereas expressignism emerged from a democracy of the psychological, the Bauhaus proposed a democracy of the technological. With the redefinition of an art academy as a design academy, notice was served that styles, genres, and academic traditions in Western art were now subservient to basic principles of design. Further, these design principles would be employed with any and all of the materials that had functional significance in contemporary technological

society. Thus the aesthetics of the artist/designer were at one with those of the builder, the architect, and the craftsperson. Communion with the Renaissance tradition was broken off, but communion with a much wider tradition of woodwork, stonework, and textiles was established, as well as a commitment to the continuing exploration of the new industrial technologies.

The design movement did not make contact with North American education until the forties and fifties, but when it did its influence was overwhelming. The Art Institute of Chicago and Carpenter Center at Harvard were direct descendants of the Bauhaus. Today, the design elements make up the most common course content in studio art programs and the studio component in art education. It is not difficult to ferret out the conditions that support this popularity. The design movement gives its first allegiance to technology, and fits its aesthetics within technological limits. In any culture that values technology for its own sake, this conception of the relatively subservient status of aesthetic interests is bound to be perceived as a favorable one.

While expressionism and design in art curricula have suggested a harmony between art and popular aesthetics, social conditions have continued to change; and art in the larger world has changed with them. The mandate of a universal expressionism has been modified by a less romantic view of non-Western art and child art, a view which is more aware of the diverse effects of cultural and social contexts on artistic form. Post-Modernism art has taken the divergent course of pattern, ritual and iconography, rather than solidifying the convergent aesthetics of expressionism. The utopian vision of the Bauhaus, too, has been challenged on all fronts: early on, by its uncomfortable proximity to the clean but inhuman fascist aesthetic, and later by the failure of modernism to meet human needs. Typical derivaties of technological modernism are buildings that no one wants to live in, forms that have internal coherence but no reference to either natural or spiritual orders. The "design elements" have been applied most energetically in the creation of advertising, more for the benefit of sponsors than for the improvement of basic life functions as theorized by Gropius, Itten, and Le Corbusier.

The avant garde in art has quite clearly changed its work and its discourse in response to changing social conditions. Public art education has done so more slowly, if at all. Today there are sharp discontinuities between aesthetic discourse in school programs and aesthetic discourse among artists. The nature of those discontinuities deserves careful investigation. If language games do make a difference in the life-world of those who participate in them, then the disjunction between school art games, art games, and society itself ought to be clearly identified.

One of the most pervasive themes in contemporary discourse in art, but not in art education, is the emergence and function of the image-world. Artists are aware that art images are not just a reflection of social reality, but are also entities in themselves which actively condition the social construction of reality. The two-pronged collaboration of art with industry, in product design and in advertising, has succeeded in a way that the founders of the Bauhaus could have foreseen only in their nightmares. Children think in advertised images; adolescents dream in them; adults construct their lives to measure up to them. Perception of the real is so effectively co-opted by the pre-structured, mass-broadcasted image that the perceiver is alienated even from personal experience. It is impossible for the artist to produce more images in this image-world without first considering the impact or, as Sontag (1978) suggests, the ecology of the pervasive corpus of images that already exists. Thus some artists choose not to create more images, but to provoke an investigation of experience through performance. Others use images in a confrontational manner, like Acconci with his video, to question the nature of the image experience itself. Those who choose to paint and sculpt do so with a new burden of responsibility, a responsibility to reveal and restore realms of experience that are no longer felt in the illusory image-world. Feminist and minority artists convey what has never been conveyed in Western culture and challenge the conditions that preserve the status quo view of reality. Criticism comes to the forefront of the art world as it becomes essential to identify the position of each art act in the battle between involvement and alienation, and to bring out the kind of experiential involvement that the effective art work provokes.

Criticism in photography exemplifies the kind of contextual awareness that seems to be growing within the arts. Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and John Berger represent different ideological orientations, yet have much in common in their views of photography. Each has an affection for the medium: Barthes a "love" of certain photographs, Sontag an "obsession" with all photographic images, and Berger a direct involvement as screenwriter and photo-essayist. Yet each is willing to break through the surface of their affection to uncover the reasons why the culture of the photograph is so disturbing. Each breaks through the language games of technical and formalist criticism to create new terms capable of tracing their experience of the photograph. Sontag uncovers its innate voyeurism. For Sontag (1978) the photograph appropriates the real to the extent that reality becomes something to be turned into an image rather than something to be lived. In this world of pure appearance there is no understanding, as understanding is always the questioning of appearances, not the acceptance of them. Berger (1980) highlights the function of this artifice in a capitalist society, where the stranger's view of our experience is not only taken to be a valid comprehension of that experience, but where those image-views are systematically marketed to us as articles worthy of consumption.

The disjunction between this kind of contextual inquiry into photography and the teaching of photography in the school and college is a broad one, perhaps as broad as any disjunctions that have preceded it in art education. The Center for Understanding Media (1978), a foundation supported agency in New York which develops media programs in education, expresses the standard view that photography captures the inaccessible, provides peak experiences, gives a feeling of success, and realizes an "intuitive philosophy in the flash of a photographic moment." While this group does have a humanistic concern with the impact of television and advertising on children, it assumes that this problem can be best averted by making children into television producers themselves, a symmetrical but probably self defeating solution. Photography is promoted by the Center not with reference to its ubiquitous presence and impact in society, but in the usual formalist way, with reference to the traditions of form and design in painting. At a time

when there is an urgent need for students to decode meaning in photographs, the school uses photography only for the simple technological reason that it is a quicker way than painting to create formally appealing and sentiment satisfying compositions.

Compare this attutude of evangelism for photography to the tone taken by Roland Barthes in his critical writing on photography. For Barthes (1981), the odd detail of clothing or gesture in the photograph can stir the emotions of the inquiring viewer because of photography's undeniable link with the real, its link with a sense of the "this has been." But for Barthes the value of the photograph stops there. In an era when critique of experience is needed, the photograph offers none. It is flat, certain, and cannot be penetrated. It is violent in that it fills the sight by force. The image-world of the photograph is thus the negation, not the realization, of the world of mental imagery we know. There are no transformations of thought instigated by it, only a definite, untransformable impression of reality fixed on the mind.

Barthes links photography to the mask of death in the theater. The photographer is the agent of death as she/he makes reality flat and certain, without a sense of duration and thus without connection to life and love. Barthes sees the paradigm of the photography world in the New York porn shop, where the image dehumanizes the world of conflicts and desires, under cover of illustrating it. In a world of images, as Barthes sees the contemporary scene, we come to consume images rather than beliefs.

It would be absurd, of course, to expect no disjunction in content between Roland Barthes and a public school program, or to ask that public awareness anticipate, parallel, or even closely follow Barthes' thinking. It is the particular contribution of a critic like Sontag or Barthes to synthesize and suggest patterns of meaning where the normal view of reality would miss those patterns. Yet, is it too much to expect that popular discourse at least be moved by the same forces that motivate these critics' inquiries? Is it absurd to ask, in other words, why the public and its system of education should not be in closer contact with its own social reality? What is clearly needed in education is a habit of criticism that would examine how visual forms are connected with life rather than inculcate a superficiality of

thoughtless decorativeness of the fashionable, the conventional, or the ideologically safe.

All levels of art education are uninformed about socially relevant critical systems. The photography example is not an isolated one. School art and art school programs alike participate in the one-upsmanship of the striking design, the layering of color and form that will stand out from the others and make its creator a star on the horizon of the arts. Just as it requires a bolder color and shinier piece of plastic to make one sign on a suburban strip stand out from another, school programs experiment with materials and designs that will create the impressive object. "Awesome" and "excellent" are the high schooler's current synonyms for the good that something beyond each of us, above us, capable of reducing us to our knees. Stereotypes of physical and material beauty are not questioned, but are systematically incorporated as comfortable end-points of the creative process. As the result, what is being transformed is not just the look of the world, not even the look of popular aesthetics, but the very capacity of the individual to invoke experience as a guide to purposeful action. It becomes increasingly difficult for a society that thinks in media images, that sees joy as a Coca-Cola commercial or friendship as a Michelob commercial, to be objective about its own culture of media imagery. Through its systematic intrusiveness the image-world replaces the possibility of criticism. In sum, the status quo of the image-world is reproduced and proliferated, not probed.

North American society needs the inquiry that discourse on art can provide. Many social and psychological crises are shared history (the effects of increasing concentrations of wealth, pressure on the family unit, fear of the future, and standarization of culture in general). Within the context of this greater social and historical reality, it would seem useful to encourage more diverse approaches to critically exploring all the forms which contribute to the understanding of this reality including visual art forms. Should the art schools, academies, college and university art departments as well as the school art programs be expected to examine the art games they promote? Are there ways to introduce contextual awareness, humanism, and healty skepticism

into the study of art at all levels. Art games can be used to play high stakes. The greatest loss ultimately may be the continued mental attitude which accepts any unexamined aesthetic or social position.

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Playing in Public
or
Creatively Expressing the
Aesthetic Dimension in Social Life

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Abstract

This philosophical study is in part a critical examination of Richard Sennett's sociological account of what it means to be out in public in the company of strangers and expressing oneself aesthetically in a playful, self-distanced encounter with them. His urging for a rediscovery of the classic mid-eighteenth century connection between actors on the stage and persons on the street in order to make social life aesthetic once again is seen as having significant implications for art educators concerned with putting into practice the aesthetic and social function of art and art education. The arguments developed in the paper take issue less with Sennett's calling for a rebirth of the aesthetic in social life and more with his one-sided view of aesthetics, art, and theatre and his notion of what it is that actors do as well as what society is and what public, self-distanced encounters should be. A view of art and art education which goes beyond the traditional narrow and limiting mainstream Western concept of art as a "thing" framed and set apart from the ordinary everyday immediate and sensuous encounters of persons in public is presented.

In The fall of public man, Richard Sennett (1977), an American sociologist. traces an interesting development in the rise of public man in the cities of London and Paris during the middle of the eighteenth century. According to Sennett, because of its size, the capital city was where one had the opportunity to come in contact with a wide diversity of people and share the sort of knowledge and information which could not be found among one's family and close friends (p. 17). Thus, when one was out in public, one was thought of as being outside the private domain of family and friends and removed from the expression of personal thoughts and feelings.

In order to facilitate civility and give order to an impersonal exchange between strangers, modes of speech and dress were adopted similar to the acting and costuming of actors in the theatre (p. 64). The street became a stage upon which persons could perform their roles believably in society and keep their personal selves at a distance. A code of dress signified the role, not the person; attention was not drawn to the person behind the role. The elite and the wealthy, for example, decked their heads with monstrous, ornate powdered wigs and painted their faces red or white, with "beauty marks" smeared on the chin, nose, or forehead; masks were also worn. At home, in private, however, the simple natural look was the fashion since no role was being played and the self did not have to be kept at a distance.

Public speech, following speech in the theatre, consisted of conventional signs (general patterns, movements, and gestures) composed and calculated to arouse emotions in the listener and, likewise, keep the speaker's (actor's) personality at a distance. Sennett makes the point that the artificiality of such performed or posed expressions evoked a spontaneity of emotional response every bit as great as--but unlike--natural expression (p. 73). The listener was released from being vulnerable to the accidental in the natural expression of personal and private feeling and could thus be more at ease.

Sennett then goes on to show how this image of public man as actor changed drastically in the nineteenth century in London and Paris. Where public man was once free to go up to a stranger and talk to him through the mediation of social conventions, he is now silent and amazed, a passive spectator to the feverish pitch of select, exciting, charismatic personalities in the streets. Sennett explains how, as a world view, individual and particular phenomena were gradually emerging from behind their general and universal categories and becoming concrete, sensuous and immediate things in themselves to be apprehended and given categories of their own (pp. 150-151). Such phenomena in people were taken to be their personalities, and it was to personality that attention was now being paid in social situations

rather than to the impersonality of the role being played.

Personality revealed itself in the way people spoke, dressed, and behaved. The self was no longer at a distance in public life; it was involuntarily out there in the open for all to see. As a result, the boundary between private and public was becoming confused. People were unprepared for the confusion and became paranoid about their inner selves being involuntarily exposed in public and went to great lengths to hide the immediate impressions their personalities made by suppressing their feelings, remaining silent, and dressing plainly (by contrast to the costuming of the previous century). These defensive measures, however, were to no avail; for they merely prompted a more refined scrutiny of personality and invited a closer decoding of more intricate details of dress, speech, and behavior by the onlooker.

The ability that people had in the previous century to perform a role in public and interact impersonally was lost. The people were left to become nothing but spectators, voyeurs. They rationalized their fears and insecurities and their new public role with the belief that the development of one's personality profited by being a silent spectator in public life; in isolation from others one was free to think and fantasize and daydream while watching life go by on the streets. Sennett (1977) characterized the loss of the ability to perform in public as "artists" deprived of an art" (p. 29).

Interestingly enough, actors in the theatre (as well as dancers, musicians, and visual artists) did not suffer the problem with personality. By contrast, they were encouraged to bring it out in their art and become those persons who could express themselves openly and clearly and be free. The theatre, concert hall, and gallery became the places where audiences could see other persons express the sort of freedom and spontaneity of feeling they were fearful of exhibiting in the street. Any attempt at being uninhibited or nonconforming in public was considered deviant behavior, and deviant meant abnormal. Few persons were willing to risk being identified with such labels; only those super beings with the confidence,

skills, and talent to continue the imagery of man-as-actor were exempt. The "star" personality, as we conceive of it today, was being born. Artists in all the arts were "elevated" above the audience, and the stage of the theatre, concert hall, and gallery took on a vibrant life of its own separate and distinct from ordinary life in the streets; public man sat silently before both, doubting his own expressive powers.

Sennett convincingly makes the point that for all our efforts today to liberate ourselves from alienation, self-doubt, and Victorian repression, we have only succeeded in adding to psychic distress by burdening our social relations with problems of intimacy, self-expression, authenticity, and identity (pp. 259-261). We have failed to see that it was the intrusion of personality in public in the last century which brought about repression, alienation, and self-doubt in the first place. He claims that any attempt to rid ourselves of repression, alienation, and self-doubt which is not at the same time an attempt to put aside our personality in public is no attempt. In the eighteenth century, it was understood that one is free to relate in public only when personality is kept at a distance. It was taken for granted that public life was impersonal.

So, Sennett urges us to put aside personality and rediscover the classic connection between the stage and the street, between aesthetic life and social life; rediscover the tradition which says we are all artists because we can act. He admits that an aesthetic dimension intrinsic to social processes is not easy to imagine; for whenever we link up art and society, we usually talk about how social conditions effect the artist's work or how the artist expresses these conditions in his work rather than how social processes themselves are artistic (p. 313). In our relations to others, we have lost contact with the power of expression as a force unto itself, separate from personality.

For Sennett, this power has its beginnings in childhood experiences of play. He cites Piaget (1951) to support his view of our coming to know expression as early as "the later months of the first year of life" when, as infants, we found pleasure and satisfaction in toying with objects

(Sennett, 1977, p. 317). He then sees this play appearing in a significantly developed form at our fourth year in our ability to toy with symbolic images. At this age, we are no longer merely delighting in immediately sensuous images, but finding pleasure and satisfaction in performing the art of playacting--taking on the role of adults, "dressing up," and acting out situations of adult life--and interacting with other children in formal games.

Sennett (1977) makes the point that in these forms of symbolic play we "focused on the expressive quality of a convention" and learned to believe in conventions, in the rules for behavior which kept our desires for instant self-gratification at a distance and enabled us to control and manipulate our expressions in order to communicate whatever we wanted to with them (p. 321). We learned that conventions, or rules, had a reality of their own too, that they were not absolutely given, that they could be "played" with, and that we could change them and improve upon them in order to bring about better social relations. We also learned, in the face of fear and frustration, to risk the unknown and carry the play to a satisfying conclusion; in games, the motivation was to win.

But, unfortunately, as Sennett also observes, children have to repress all this knowledge and ability as they grow up today and become adults; for in adult society self-distanced play is not the name of the game. Revealing oneself voluntarily and openly to others is now all important for improving social relations; intimacy and authenticity are the moral imperatives. What goes by the name of play is actually amusement--forms of fantasy to provide escape from the tyrannous reality of imposed self-expression and the incivility resulting from the lifting of the barriers of artificiality between people.

Oddly enough, in the midst of this increasingly open self-liberated society, the self-doubting, alienated, passive spectator of the last century is still very much with us, sitting in slavish, uncritical admiration before a spectacle of "star" performers, being entertained by them, yet wishing to be like them, wishing to have their freedom of action and expression. And,

needless to say, the skilled charismatic performers of the last century are still very much with us too, and they are still the only persons exhibiting personality in public without having to remove the artificial barriers between themselves and other persons, without having to give up the art of self-distanced play, the art of theatrical illusion to arouse emotion in an audience.

What Sennett does not tell us, however, is that there are artists today in all the arts who are not interested in being stars and exhibiting their personalities and keeping the artificial barriers of theatrical illusion between themselves and their audiences to arouse their emotions. They do not want to be amusers or to merely entertain. They have no desire whatsoever to provide fantasies for people. They believe that art is something other than craft and representation, something more than contriving generalized make believe situations and calculating words, gestures, costumes, sounds, colors, lighting, shapes, and body movements to arouse certain kinds of emotions in people so that they can discharge them harmlessly in the unreality of the make believe situations. For them, art is a process of creatively and imaginatively expressing aesthetic feelings and emotions which are not private or personal to the one imagining them (Collingwood, 1958). As artists, with deep concerns for the aesthetic, moral, and social responsibility of art, they are interested in showing their audiences what it is like for persons to be freely and expressively intimate and authentic with one another in public without their intimacy and authenticity having to be a disclosure of private feelings or a means of satisfying unfulfilled personal needs and desires.

They would like their audiences to become familiar with those feelings that can be warmly expressed without their expression having to be a threat or a burden to anyone. They would like all persons in society to know that the potential for self-distanced closeness, contact, and familiarity among strangers in public is right there, already given, in the simultaneity of their immediate and sensuous presence to one another, in the sensuous and immediate interpenetrating of their bodily spaces. The power of the aesthetic is already given in that brief moment when their eyes meet and they are seeing

one another from the underlying level of wholeness where their living bodies and minds are unified with the world. It is where the dichotomies of self and other, public and private, personal and impersonal, and stranger and close acquaintance are not yet present to consciousness and determining their responses to one another (Madenfort, 1975).

By simply focusing upon and giving their undivided attention to the sensuousness of their seeing, sounding, touching, and moving experiences when freely and openly moving in and about other persons and touching them and bursting forth with vocal sounds and creatively expressing in an immediate manner the intertwining unifying presence of one another's live sensuous beings, the artists allow their private and personal selves, with all their compulsive needs and desires and their frightening unresolved sense of separation pervading their experiences since early childhood to fall into the background and show us new and vitally significant ways of not only being close, making contact, and becoming familiar with other persons but coming to know and experience the underlying sensuous and immediate wholeness existing between all persons.

Of course, Sennett would not encourage this particular aesthetic of artistic creation and expression among persons in public because he regards with suspicion any level of mind which makes no distinction between self and other. Taking a view similar to Lasch (1979), he sees any attempt at being whole with other persons in immediate and sensuous intimacy as narcissistic and destructive to conventional tools of culture. To him, it is nothing more than another attempt at erasing boundaries between people and doing away with roles and games simply to become immersed within one's own feelings and come to know oneself more intimately and authentically. It is to experience oneself <u>in</u> the other rather than to experience the other as other, as separate and external to oneself. Sennett sees this narcissism, of not experiencing the other as other, as reducing the desire to produce the conventional tools of culture that permit one to play at a distance from the self, the play that he considers necessary for being sociable in public life (p. 325).

While it may be that the playing of conventional roles and games is necessary for the practical workings out of certain aspects of public life, and that personality should be kept out of them, it may also be that the playing with others in immediate and sensuous wholeness is needed just as much for the practical workings out of certain other aspects of public life. Sennett is correct in pointing out the negative effects of narcissism on the self-distanced playing of roles and games in public; but he fails to see that the reason many persons are not able to put themselves at a distance and play roles and games in public is not so much because they are narcissistically desiring to be their true selves in public as it is because their true selves have become all the roles and games they have been playing throughout the many years of their lives. Without realizing it, in growing up, they have imagined themselves into being the roles and games they played; they came to believe the play to be real, to be what life was all about. They never learned to know or develop their individualities, that part of themselves which is undivided and fundamentally whole with the world.

When Sennett tells us that, at four to seven years of age, children learned to believe in the magic of conventions and rules for behavior when pretending to be adults and playing formal games, he is as much as saying that children imagined themselves into being the roles and games they played. But he does not take the position that children, during these years, are still by and large under the influence of imagination and not yet able to clearly differentiate when they are playing and playacting on the one hand and living so-called reality on the other. He does not see that everything they do is an expression of their imaginations and assumed to be real. When playing and playacting, they do not self-consciously choose to put reality at a distance and then pretend to live it. If they did, they probably would never learn to believe in the reality, the magic, of conventions and rules for behavior and become the roles and games they were playing. They probably would never learn to sit silently in isolation before the fantasies of amusers and believe them to be the reality they are not able to live in public. Children are never told while growing up

that the social reality they are imagining is actually a fantasy, a substitute dream for the individual which was lost when conventions and rules for behavior became necessary. Everyone is undoubtedly too busy trying to successfully be and become the roles and games making up the social reality of the culture being imagined.

But, when children become adults and possess the power of understanding and reason, they can know the difference between magic and fantasy on the one hand and reality on the other. With the help of artists rather than magicians or amusers, they can come to know their individualities and get in touch with what they fundamentally are and what they secretly desire to be. They can dis-identify with their self-distanced playing of roles and games, the selves they have become, and identify with the sensuous images that are immediately given as the unity of their living bodies and the world, without thinking that they are narcissistically regressing to the self-distanced playing of infancy or fantasizing themselves to be the reality they are not.

When toying with objects in our infancy, it was not a matter of having to put ourselves at a distance in order to imaginatively be and become sensuous images and bring them forth in new and meaningful ways; for we were already imaginatively being and becoming sensuous images by virtue of our being the unity of our living bodies and the world. We were not yet a self separate from sensuous images (Wilber, 1980). Actually, it was in our toying with objects that ourselves and the world were being creatively and expressively brought forth as two separate entities. And it was only later when we imaginatively and playfully learned to talk that sensuous images gradually became symbolic images, that ourselves and the objects became the words and terms we were speaking, and that we became the roles and games we were playing. It was then that sensuous images in their immediacy finally became lost to us and that, in turn, our ability to be immediately and sensuously whole with the world was forgotten or repressed (Schachtel, 1959).

The point is: we do not have to wait until the world becomes a stranger to rediscover that we are fundamentally whole with it. We can

encourage children to continue believing in their ability to play with the world in immediate and sensuous wholeness at the same time that they are taking on the playing of roles and games and learning to believe in conventions and rules for behavior (Madenfort, 1982). We can show them that they do not have to lose consciousness of being whole with the world and other persons and come to believe that the separations between themselves, the world, and other persons are there as a built-in feature of reality and only bridged by reaching out and making the sort of contact that comes through words and concepts and conventional systems of communication.

Up to seven years of age, children experience words and concepts and conventional systems of symbolic interaction against the sensuous and immediate background of the unity of their living bodies and the world, anyway; they are not even separate from the words they utter. They continue to experience the undivided connection between words sounded as expressions unto themselves separate from the objects they name and their gestural and sensuous content (Werner, 1961). Words are heard by them as sensuous and moving wholes possessing their own color, shape, texture, taste, and kinaesthetic flow; and the children are even creatively and imaginatively bringing forth words and names of their own to vocally express in a concrete and immediate way the sensuous and moving qualities of their experiences. When rubbing their hands over the bark of a tree and feeling the tree's roughly textured surface, they say things like, "The tree has scruggles on it," or, as they finish eating a chocolate ice cream cone, they smack their lips and utter something like, "Boy! That tasted optayunder!"

Of course, when thechildren come forth with words like scruggles and optayunder, they are not self-consciously attempting to foolishly make up words that have never been heard before, nor are they attempting to form word concepts of sensuous and moving experiences. Rather, they are spontaneously and creatively expressing their ability to experience with the wholeness of their living bodies and the world and live the similarities between the sensuous and moving qualities of their touching and tasting experiences of sounding vocally. Children can imagine for themselves and

create their own meaningful forms of expressions. They do not have to be always taking on predetermined, readymade conventions and rules for behavior.

In art education, it is important for us to take a broader and more general view on what constitutes art and art teaching. We can no longer afford to remain bound to the narrow and limiting traditional mainstream Western concept of art as a "thing" framed and set apart from life (Kaprow, 1983). It is not enough to merely think of art as capable of expressing life, but not being and becoming life. In a manner similar to performance artists, we need to express ourselves poetically, musically, and aesthetically before the children and be more whole with our speaking, touching, seeing, and body movements in order to give the children the confidence they need to continue doing the same (Madenfort, 1977). We need to help them break the boundaries of separation and dividedness built into the syntaxical structure of ordinary verbal language. We need to show them that there are other realities to existence and other ways of expressing themselves wholly to the world.

In order for the children to feel their talking and vocal soundings flowing to the world and fusing with it and giving verbal and vocal meaning to all that comes within their gaze, we can take them out of doors onto the lawn and have them lie down with us on the grass with their backs and heads against the ground and their eyes looking up to the sky. And, once they are all quiet and comfortably lying there on the grass and looking up into the sky and feeling all alone with it, feeling that there is nothing in the world but themselves and the sky, we can suddenly and expressively start talking to the sky and poetically say hello to its clear deep iridescent blue and pour forth whatever is moving us of its immediacy and sensuousness.

Some children might snicker and giggle a little by our sudden outburst of imaginative vocal soundings and expressions, but it would not be long before all of them were talking and sounding imaginatively with us to the sky and, together, all of us were becoming a full chorus of many voices

resounding and speaking within the spaces where the sounds of our voices and the blue of the sky intermingle and blend together, where the sky is enveloped by our voices and creatively given meaning by our voices' sensuous power, out of our living bodies' wholeness with the sky. And it would not be long before the sky itself was suddenly speaking and singing and giving new meaning to our speaking and singing and we and the sky were singing a duet glorifying our being whole together.

From this experience we can allow the children the sensuous freedom to go on to speaking and singing and being immediately whole with flowers, trees, buildings, rocks, grass, and all the objects of the world (Madenfort, 1972, 1973, 1979; Bersson, 1982). We can encourage them to move in and about other children and sound vocally with them and allow their arms and hands and the whole of their bodies to flow in abandonment and expressively "sing and dance" the sensuous and immediate wholeness between themselves, the world, and other persons. We can teach them that art and life can be one.

It is important for children to discover the individuality of their own bodily movements and to express in their own ways the aesthetic wholeness existing between themselves and other persons. They must not be made to feel that they are ultimately or basically separate and divided from other persons and having to follow predetermined cultural patterns and rules for behavior in order to be whole with them. They are to have confidence in the individuality (undividedness) of their movements and to be guided by it as they move among other persons. They must discover for themselves the value and significance that playing with other persons in immediate and sensuous wholeness has for bettering public life and bringing about a creative renewal to the meaning of being an individual among individuals. By being able to go beyond the dichotomy of the individual and society, they will create for themselves a view of the world and a life with other persons in public grounded on the truth, clarity, openness, and moral significance of immediate and sensuous wholeness, the necessary being of aesthetic expressions in social life.

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Nicaragua, Art and Social Change: Interviews with Three Artists

by

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Abstract

Five years after their participation in the successful 1979 revolutionary struggle against the Somoza dictatorship, the artists of Nicaragua continue to be an effective force in redefining, shaping and defending their country's cultural heritage. In these years it has also become evident that the government continues to value and support all of the arts as a significant component in the formation of a national consciousness and identity. The data for the following paper is based on the author's personal experiences in Nicaragua. Starting in 1981, four summers were spent interviewing artists, visiting the places where they worked, and talking to individuals in the governmental institutions that are responsible for the promotion of the arts in Nicaragua. In this country of approximately 2.5 million people, 19% earn their livelihood as artists or artisans, of which 90% are women whose commitment to personal artistic development is matched by their commitment to the revolution. The situation in Nicaragua exemplifies the relationship of art to the process of social change.

One cannot discuss Nicaragua's artists without some understanding of the present governmental institutions that are responsible for the promotion of culture in general and more specifically the promotion of the visual arts, crafts and art education. The Ministry of Culture, directed by the priest and poet Ernesto Cardenal, was established immediately after the revolution with the objective of implementing programs to make a broad variety of cultural experiences available to all segments of the population (LaDuke, 1984b). One of the Ministry's first projects was the establishment of Culture Centers which now number 23. These centers are in all the major population areas with outreach programs for the rural population. They provide a variety of classes, for children and adults, that include drawing and painting, ceramics, sewing, poetry workshops, guitar, folk dancing and theater.

The national coordinator of all the Culture Centers' art and craft programs is the painter Maria Gallo (LaDuke, 1982c) whom I interviewed in

1982, 1983 and 1984. Since each Culture Center also has an exhibit space, for the first time in their lives many students, housewives, factory workers and farmers now have the opportunity to create as well as to view art.

The Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers established in 1982, is the supportive mechanism that nurtures and encourages all of the artists. The total ASTC membership comprises 900 diverse artists that are organized into seven separate unions consisting of dancers, musicians, choral groups, poets, theater actors, circus performers and photographers. The poet, Rosarillo Murillo, was elected director of ASTC and the artist Luis Morales the director of the Artists' Union. These are the two key people who implement the cultural programs with active input from most of the artists.

The Artists' Union, consisting only of the visual artists, painters and sculptors, grew from 60 in 1982 to 90 in 1984. New membership applications are received each week for evaluation by Luis Morales and a committee of artists. Meetings are held monthly, or more frequently, based on the artist's current needs and issues. For example, sometimes there are painting critiques, or the planning of workshops, conferences and collective exhibits, or discussions relating to the frequent shortages of art supplies. More recently, the formation of Culture Brigades that visit the war zones has been a key issue.

The physical heart of the Artists' Union and the country's primary exhibition center is the Casa Fernando Gordillo, located in Managua's Pargue Carmen. Luis Morales is responsible for its active exhibition schedule which primarily focuses upon collective rather than on individual exhibits of Nicaraguan professional and primitive painters and sculptors. Their work is also seen in many international exhibits, and many artists can live on the income received from sales. ASTC only takes a 20% commission which is utilized toward the packing and shipping of the art, as well as for further promotion of all arts.

Many foreign visitors and diplomatic representatives throughout the world that come to Nicaragua have recognized the exuberance, aesthetic quality and significance of contemporary Nicaraguan painting and crafts and have been buying then in quantity. Nicaragua has two distinct groups

of painters. Those labeled as "primitive" are basically self taught, having developed a detailed style of imagery, focusing on landscape and descriptive scenes and events, as discussed in the article, "Nicaragua, the Painter-Peasants of Solentiname," (LaDuke, 1984b). The other group consists of professional artists who have been trained at Nicaragua's National Fine Arts School (LaDuke, 1982a, 1983ab) or have studied abroad. They paint in diverse styles and techniques that include impressionism, surrealism and abstract expressionism. Both primitive and professional artists participate in the Artists' Union, part of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers or ASTC.

Surprisingly, even with its present military and defense concerns, the Nicaraguan government through the Ministry of the Interior continues to purchase paintings for exhibit in government buildings. The person in charge of selecting the art for public display is Orlando Sobalvarro, a prominent painter. All this activity contrasts sharply with the Somoza era when there was minimal government support for the arts, no large public exhibition centers, and artists could only depend upon a few commercial galleries for survival.

In general the level of cultural concern under Nicaragua's 45-year Somoza family dictatorship by the Somoza family can be exemplified by the illiterarcy rate which averaged 50% for the urban population and 80% for the "campesinos" or peasants (Randall, 1981). An illiterate, passive population could more easily be exploited for the interests of the wealthy, one percent which controlled more than half of the land. The Somoza family alone owned five million acres of land, the size of El Salvador (Lernoux, p. 83).

Besides land reform programs and the establishment of numerous medical centers throughout the country, a massive and intensive literarcy campaign was one of the most popular and successful events that occurred immediately after the revolution in which many artists participated. In 1980, during a six-month period of time, a voluntary literarcy brigade was organized that included over 100,000 people. Volunteers from the United States, Europe and Latin America fanned out across the country to teach basic reading and writing skills. Illiteracy in Nicaragua has now been reduced to approximately 15%.

During 1981 and 1982 I was primarily concerned with the personal development of the artists and the style and theme of their work in the period prior to the revolution, as well as their creativity during this almost calm post-revolutionary era of progress and growth. However, by 1983 and 1984, the political situation had changed. Nicaraguans were being attacked along their Costa Rican and Honduranean border zones by contras or ex-Somocistas in an escalating war. How some of the artists participated in the defense of their country during this post-revolutionary era through their creative work is a significant aspect of my interviews during 1983 and 1984.

During my July, 1983, visit, as the escalation of the covert war continued along Nicaragua's borders, I learned from Luis Morales that over 100 artists, including 13 painters, had volunteered to participate in the four Culture Brigades that were organized by the Artists' Union to visit the war zones for three-week periods of time (LaDuke, 1984a). The purpose of the Culture Brigades was to give all artists-poets, musicians, dancers, and singers, as well as visual artists an opportunity to interact with soldiers through planned and innovative cultural activities. Thus, with first-hand awareness of the danger and horror of war the artists interpret this aspect of Nicaragua's current reality through their own means and style of expression.

Most often the artists traveled to the war zones during periods of relative calm. They wore uniforms, carried rifles for self protection and many visual artists brought their sketchbooks along which they filled with drawings of their comrades (Fig. 1). However, some of the paintings which have been developed as a result of this experience are abstracted symbolic interpretations of aggression whereas others take a more literal approach. What is significant is that there is no demand upon the artists to create in any one style (Ferlinghetti, 1984).

Julie Aguirre, a mural painter whom I first interviewed in 1981, told me at our 1984 meeting that she also participated in a Culture Brigade which visited a town frequently under attack near the Honduran border. There she and two other artists were requested by the people of the town to paint a

FIGURE 1. Drawings of comrades in the war zone.
Artist: Arnaldo Guillen

FIGURE 2. Literacy Campaign: Mural. Luis Alfonso Velazquez Elementary School, Managua, Nicaragua.
Artist: Julie Aguirre.

mural on the theme of the marketplace. The artists painted in a primitive style, similar to Julie's earlier mural at the Luis Alfonso Velazquez Elementary School in Managua (Fig. 2).

Julie told me that she was also a member of the militia and participated annually in a one-month program of military training in order to learn how to organize and defend her neighborhood in case of attach. Other militia members are required to travel to the agricultural zones in order to defend the workers while they harvest the country's vital economic crops of cotton and coffee. Under constant tension and threat of war, life must go on, and Julie's life reflected this for she was preparing for a two-woman exhibit that would focus on the theme of women.

In 1983 and 1984, preparation for the July 19th celebration of the revolution included selecting a general theme reflecting the current political situation for the collective art exhibit of Nicaraguan artists at the Casa Fernando Gordillo. "Art, a Weapon of the People in Defense of the Revolution" was the 1983 slogan. The 1984 slogan also emphasized the reality of war: "Everyting for the Battle Front, Everyting for the Combatants." However, not all of the exhibited work reflected this theme. For example, the title of Niger Medina's painting was Landscape with Three Nudes.

In the process of following the personal development of Nicaraguan artists over a four year period of time, I remain astonished at their consistent production, on going creative development and commitment to their art while they continue to participate in the defense of their country. Many have suffered again and again the tragedy of family and comrades wounded and killed in this current three year war of aggression as well as suffering from prior personal experiences of incarceration, torture and exile.

In 1984 I had the opportunity of interviewing two artists whom I had not met in previous years, although I was already familiar with some of their work. I had long admired the decorative murals of Alejandro Canales and the sensual, surrealistic female nudes painted by Niger Medina. In contrast to these artists Cecilia Rojas, currently a student and teacher at the National Fine Arts School, offered a unique woman's perspective. While each of these artists' work is stylistically and thematically diverse, their

personal stories reflect the shared pride of all of Nicaragua's artists in their cultural heritage and revolution.

Alejandro Canales

After Alejandro Canales experienced the dynamic power of his decorative figurative images on yards rather than on inches of space, it is not surprising that he has since created a very few easel paintings "as my mind is now primarily focused on murals." Before the 1979 Revolution he had never painted a mural, but "necessity forces one to learn." To commemorate the first anniversary of the revolution, he was one of the first artists who was asked to try his hand at painting a mural at the Luis Alfonso Velazquez Elementary School, located in the 1972 earthquake destroyed district of Managua. Now thousands of international tourists annually visit this reconstructed, tree planted site in order to attend cultural activities and to admire the murals.

The theme of Canales's mural is the Literacy Campaign (Fig. 3) which it symbolically portrays through stylized, multi-colored forms of women and children, against a stark white background of the 70 by 14 foot school wall. What is particularly pleasing is Canales's personal, lyrical vision of the women whose full forms are portrayed with dignity and tenderness as they embrace a child or reach downward toward a bird or outward in space. Details such as fingers and hair are often rhythmically elongated. Rather than conforming to a stereotypical concept of form, each of his figures is a personal portrayal of the Nicaraguan people. Although he had six assistants, Canales considers the compositional challenge of such immense space as "difficult," but now, after five years of experience, "the process is much easier."

Canales was born in 1945, and at 12 years of age he was apprenticed to a carpenter, but continued to draw and paint on his own. His formal training began when he received a scholarship to the National Fine Arts School where he was then able to study drawing, painting and sculpture from 1961 until 1970.

FIGURE 3. Literacy Campaign: Mural Detail. Luis Alfonso Velazquez Elementary School, Managua, Nicaragua, 70' x 14'. Artist: Alejandro Canales.

In the years that followed, Canales struggled to maintain himself through sales of his art work. In 1977, after becoming involved in the revolutionary movement, he began to demonstrate his abilities on walls or large sheets of paper by creating quick drawings, caricatures or graffiti for street audiences that portrayed political ideas and events. Mural painting followed as a logical activity except that now his imagery is designed with more permanence and has greater aesthetic appeal.

At the time I met with Canales, he was working on an enormous vertical mural, 30 by 14 meters on the facade of the Telcor Building near the Plaza of the Revolution. Based on the theme of Communication Past and Present (Fig. 4), this Telcor mural is scheduled for completion by the 5th annual July 19th celebration of the revolution. Unlike his earlier work, the forms and background space will be completely filled with subtle mixtures of warm and cool colors which he prepares for his assistants to apply flat, without shading, within his compositional outlines.

The complex design of this immense mural begins at the top edge with a rural farm scene. Horizontal lines dissect the lower landscape area which contains a satellite dish. A vertical pole with the red and black FSLN flag leads downward to the heroic revolutionary portraits of Fonseca and Sandino. The organization FSLN or Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional was founded in 1961 in the revolutionary struggle to organize the people to fight against Somoza. Carlos Fonseca was one of the founding members. General Sandino was killed by Somoza in 1934 (LaFeber, p. 163; Randall, 1978, p. 8).

A black silhouetted profile of a soldier with a rifle who is using a telephone pole for an observation post leads the eye to the bottom right-hand corner of Canales' celebration mural. Even in this incomplete stage the mural's color coordination are impressively revealed.

In these past few years Canales has been kept busy with opportunities to paint murals in Managua's Ruben Dario Theater and the Social Security Building. He has also painted murals in Mozambique, Africa; Eugene, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington. His work offers a personal perspective of the integration of art, politics and the reality of war.

FIGURE 4. Communication Past and Present. Telcor Building, Managua, Nicaragua, 1984.
Artist: Alejandro Canales.

Niger Medina

Whether the theme is a typical portrait of the heroic general Sandino with his red neckerchief and sombrero (Fig. 5) or a picture of a female partially clothed, one is drawn into the atmosphere of Niger Medina's paintings less for their subjects than for his oil painting technique. In his predominately surrealistic paintings, he surrounds the smooth contours of exposed flesh, whether it is the hands and face of Sandino, or the voluptuous curves of a female torso, with deep folds of stylized clothing textures. He creates an intriguing labyrinth of light and shadow, sharp and soft edges that have a life of their own apart from the painting's theme.

Stimulated by his two older brothers, Santos and Efrin Medina, who are among Nicaragua's prominently exhibited painters, Niger at age 25 has sought to develop his own distinctive style. Though influenced by his brothers, who paint very differently from one another, Niger is essentially self taught, and for the past four years he has been exhibiting at the Casa Fernando Gordillo, supporting himself through the sale of his paintings.

Niger works consistently and believes that a "harmony of color and form should permeate each painting and that artists should be equally content." He also realizes that "the artists of Nicaragua have to take a political stand because of our current reality of war, but we should not lower our aesthetic quality in our need for national unity and the formation of our cultural heritage." Instead of war, Niger would prefer to have cultural exchange with artists from the United States. He also speaks of the significance of "international solidarity for Nicaragua's revolution manifested by many nations and people throughout the world."

Niger views himself as "still in the process of developing and breaking with my past influences as I hate to stagnate within one single style or form of painting." However, it is to Niger's credit, with Nicaragua's abundant supply of Sandino portraits silhouetted on doors and walls, or painted on posters, banners and billboards, that his portrait is not lost in the crowd. Beyond the familiar pose and features, the

FIGURE 5. Sandino. Oil on canvas, 40" x 52", 1983.
Artist: Niger Medina.

aesthetic richness of vibrant dark and light pattern, textural detail and compositional elements compel one's eyes to linger on this particular Sandino portrait.

Since he is worried about becoming too fixed within a certain style and theme, Niger plans to move soon to a coastal town and develop new painting themes based upon the lives of the fishermen. Due to his slow meticulous technique and the fairly large scale of many of his canvases, he produces less than a dozen paintings a year. Although much of his work is not political, he still feels totally accepted and integrated within the Artists' Union. The artists respect his personal integrity as well as the quality of his work.

All of the artists are proud that Nicaragua has plans for the future construction of a major national art museum. Many world famous artists have donated their paintings to the museum which has been postponed because of the war. Niger believes that "all kinds of art experience should be available for the people, including abstract, surrealistic and primitive styles of painting rather than only in the possession of private families."

In contrast to his portrait of Sandino, Niger's elegant, brown-toned female nudes confront us with a timeless and classical view of a stable, war-free reality for which people everywhere long. In this sense his imagery is a refreshing respite and departure from the reality that does exist.

Cecilia Rojas

Since the 1979 revolution women have begun to appear in greater numbers both as students and as faculty members of Nicaragua's historically male-dominated National Fine Arts School. After 12 years of teaching elementary school and raising two children, Cecilia Rojas decided in 1978 to re-enter school as an art student. Now, while in her final year of study and preparation for her thesis exhibit, she also teaches two painting classes at the Fine Arts School. Rojas explains that "even since the revolution, with tuition and art supplies provided free by the government, it still is not

easy for women and especially women with children to study art as their economic maintenance is a problem."

Using the facade of masks as the focus of her imagery, Rojas penetrates beneath the surface to reveal the use of masks for traditional, symbolic as well as contemporary revolutionary roles. She has chosen to paint masks instead of people's faces because at age 35 she considers herself "too old to develop the technical capacities for realistic portraiture." However, masks have provided her with a stylistic and thematic basis for developing her self expression.

The painting, LITERACY CAMPAIGN (Fig. 6), was inspired by documentary photographs of Nicaragua's post-revolutionary literacy program in which she also participated. She considers this event as "one of my most formative personal experiences." For the first time thousands of young students and teachers, organized in brigades, left the cities to teach basic reading and writing skills for six months in the countryside to families of campesinos. This was the first time that many middle class women had ever left their parental homes and experienced the hardships of life in the countryside.

In her painting Rojas shows a tender relationship between the teacher and the learner portrayed with masks - one sunbronzed, one fair - hovering over a book. A strong linear rhythm as well as three-dimensional or sculptured quality is created by the dark outer edge of the simplified forms of the sombrero, torso, book and mask as each color is blended smoothly from dark to light. The drama of her themes is amplified by her use of partially visible body forms that support the huge masks which dominate the canvas.

In her brief few years of dedication and maturation, Rojas has deliberately opted to develop her individual style and color sensitivity. Relying less on heavily applied and textured pigments utilized by many of the professional artists, she carefully blends warm yellow and red ochres and juxtaposes them with the deliberately cool dominant tones of grey blue and blue-greens. The simplicity of her carefully selected and designed forms seems well integrated with her color selection and application. In selecting

FIGURE 6. Literacy Campaign: Oil on Masonite, 42" x 48", Artist: Cecilia Rojas.

masks as her means of symbolizing life, Rojas is able to portray the continuity between Nicaragua's past and present.

Masks have been worn by the revolutionary participants to obscure their identity during times of armed conflict as in the town of Masaya in their 1978-79 insurrection against the Somoza dictatorship. These revolutionary fighters were afraid of reprisals upon their families by Somoza's National Guard if their identities were known. Traditional masks which portray the Spanish conquest, the forces of good and evil, and the various folk tales and myths are donned annually during innumerable festivals and Saints' Days celebrations throughout Nicaragua, such as the 1984 Saint's Day celebration in the town of Jinotepe.

At present Rojas is also a member of the Artists' Union of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers. She participates in group exhibits but is working hard to complete 20 paintings for her first one-person exhibit at the Casa Fernando Gordillo in conjunction with her Master's thesis. Since the Revolution Cecilia Rojas will be only the second woman to graduate from the National Fine Arts School, where she hopes to continue teaching and developing as a painter. As Rojas continues to challenge herself thematically, to probe beneath the surface and to express her personal and national identity, one wonders what painting themes she, as well as the other artists, will develop in the future, when there is peace.

The Director of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers, poet Rosario Murillo, summarizes the role of Nicaraguan artists:

> ....our fundamental purpose is to create art of high quality that reflects the reality of our people. For this goal there are no limitations of established formulas or styles. All the doors of the imagination are open to the artist's creative capacity, knowing that it is the revolutionary spirit of the artists that determines the capabilities of transmitting or recreating reality in aesthetic terms, and it is their work that provides us with revolutionary art. . . and that this revolutionary art is being created by artists who are making and not just observing the Revolution. (Ferlinghetti, 1984)

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Who Needs It: A Review of Instant Art Instant Culture

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Laura Chapman's book, Instant Art Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools, Teachers College Press, New York, 1982, was difficult to review. I found that while I generally agreed with what was written at the same time I had an uncomfortable feeling. I came to the conclusion that Chapman dealt with the symptoms well but those symptoms together indicate a different disease than the one she diagnosed. This review will be from the standpoint of the visual arts alone, it will be critical of an important and useful book, and also of a profession which is more important than it seems to know.

Chapman has a big subject; how art is taught in the public schools, what is wrong with that teaching, the myths about art and art teaching, why art is not given greater support in public schools, and finally what could be done to alter the teaching of art and to raise public awareness and support for art. If in some places this review seems about other than what is in the book, or what is not said strongly enough, it is because of the largeness of the subject and because the specific contents have already been well documented in prior reviews.

There are children and some serious teachers being hurt ultimately not because of lack of support from the outside but because of the practices, attitudes, and ideas of those in the art professions. Chapman's is a good and useful book, but it does not forcefully enough recommend a solution which goes to the root of the problem.

Serious support for the visual arts will not, and should not come until the root cause of the problem, the lack of congruence between our real and existing culture and the "visual arts," is acknowledged and to some degree lessened by those of us who are professionally involved in the arts. There is no need for culture-wide support for the visual arts in education because they do not have culture-wide meaning or function as they are now often

conceived and taught. Chapman recognizes that current teaching in the visual arts does not serve a wide enough need but what she recommends would not solve the major problem.

Chapman suggests the visual arts form a major part of a triad of subject areas which together with communication and calculation skill. should form the major content of all public school curriculum, she writes in her introduction:

> "I have cited the arts, sciences, and humanities (referring to social studies) as broad fields of study which, in addition to mathematics and the practical use of language, ought to be required in the general education of all students in elementary and secondary school."

This would seem to place the visual arts on at least an equal basis with other elements in education: indeed it would to the minds of the modern liberal middle class. This is deceptive for while the liberal middle class still has a modern mythos we are now in a post-modern world. "Modern" now refers to a period and a period style. The truth that art is expressive of what is valued by individuals and cultures was transformed in the myth of modernism to mean that artists (and art teachers) are value leaders, that they have a unique capacity and responsibility for what is good. I can't help but feel Laura Chapman believes this herself at some level. The artist-teacher assumes the role of teaching what is good (for you) or filtering the good from the bad (whether it is art or students). This puts the artist and the art teacher squarely in the role of identifying, nurturing and elevating a narrow range of artifacts, and a few people. Everyone's needs as indicated by everyone's desires, culture, and the needs of functioning groups are not uniformly considered. Myth serves to justify the categorization and degradation of people.

A more useful view of art is as simply something people do: it is one of the defining human characteristics like language or the thumb. The visual arts have had and will have, a fundamental role in many aspects of life as useful, entertaining, and expressive. Like language, visual thinking is value neutral to be used for good, bad, gain, fear, seduction or release. To elevate art too far and give it a priori moral function, to

see it in only a judgmental manner is often to destroy it.

An artist may use art for moral purpose, socially or in its own terms, but that should be the artist's choice. No onus should be put upon choosing not to do so just as we might choose to write a note, a poem, or a memo with equal morality. The notion that all art and "good design" should serve some purifying ideal may have been necessary in a Western culture which needed to accommodate to industrialization and which was becoming mass society. It has much less justification in the pluralistic culture of post-modern times. The artist and teacher who clings to the modern myth does not fight elitism. By playing a role in this outdated mythos the artist makes elites.

It is still often conceived that to be an artist or art teacher one should be involved with what to value: to suggest otherwise or to indicate that visual organization could be used for other functions is somehow to be corrupt. Artists and teachers easily become champions for an exclusivist use of their craft.

The other two components of the triad - science, partly via technology, and social studies via what they teach about people and institutions - are involved in all of life, work and leisure. They teach concepts and skills useful to all sorts of people for all sorts of reasons. We associate the arts with valuing - often someone else's valuing, but not with something "useful" - and relegate it to leisure, specifically to that part of leisure which is good for you but which you get over as quickly as possible so you can get on to the real fun.

Both the sciences and social studies are interconnected with the basic skills of communication and computation. They require the use of speaking, reading, and calculating and they can be used as vehicles to teach speaking, reading and calculating. The visual arts as they are now conceived do not and can not. Again this revolves around the idea of valuing. Math teachers teach math, one does not often hear of their avoiding less able students, or concentrating on the abstract purity of numbers theory, much as they might like to do those things. They teach math to students who will figure their taxes, build bombs, or whatever. A broadly based approach to visual understanding would need and involve skills as basic as reading or math. The

greatest part of the elementary schools' responsibility to the visual arts part of education involves developing visual and perceptual skills necessary for the understanding and organization of meaningful form by whatever conceptual, illusionistic or symbolic means are appropriate, and for the discovery of meanings visually manifested. Those skills are necessary to organize and communicate great quantities of information with the economy necessary in our world. Consider the amount of information available in that visual document, the road map. Maps, charts, graphs, non-commercial and commercial graphics all require visual skills to make and use and all are essential to most people in our pluralistic society. Children need to become aware of the subtleties of visual rhetoric if they are to deal with the mass of information and propoganda in media. People need sophisticated visual skills even if they never make a pot or enter a museum. Chapman correctly argues for an approach to art education which is developmental, sequential and integrated, and which involves professionals and sophisticated support materials at all levels.

Although it should also form a part of the primary program Chapman's recommendation for inclusion of or greater emphasis on art appreciation and history would have greatest impact on the secondary level. She goes so far as to suggest that a studio background is not the only, or even necessarily the best preparation for the art teacher. It is true that the studio courses art education students take normally require great amounts of time to impart relatively narrow content, and many studio instructors on the college level are only dimly aware of the larger questions in art beyond their medium and time. This problem is compounded for public school teachers who have less time for a particular subject and whose teachers are likely even less knowledgeable about art in a broad sense. It would certainly be reasonable to balance studio projects with art appreciation and history through which differing visual concepts may be presented more rapidly and possibly more objectively.

To give a meaningful exposure to art appreciation the art teachers would need a knowledge and capacity for objectivity which few programs in art education now offer or foster. Many among those who teach studio

courses and control programs in art education still believe that art teachers, critics, historians, theoreticians and even applied artists exist in a parasitical relationship to the fine arts. Future art teachers would need exposure which is broad enough and deep enough to counter the Renaissance, Modern and fine artists biases which pervade many art and art education programs. For the Renaissance myth of the specialness of the artist and the modern one that art in its purity is a vehicle to either a classless society or for the identification of those with refined sensibilities must be broken if we are to have public school art programs that serve culture-wide and not just groups within the culture. By progressively separating themselves from a broad cultural base and by championing a reductivist fine arts position art teachers often find themselves valuing concepts of art higher than people. It is not clear that there is any distinction in the quality of feeling one has before a Hudson River landscape, a new van, an engraved shotgun, a lithograph of ducks coming into a pond or a Mark Rothko. I am sure that having feelings for one of these and not another has nothing to do with the quality of a person.

Consider the client. In what ways will the people the public school students become need the visual arts and visual skills. A few of them will become art professionals including those entering the fields of art teaching, design (graphic and industrial), fine arts, connoisseurship, architecture and museum work. Of this group a small part, those becoming fine artists, is served best by current practice and even they would benefit by the adoption of Chapman's recommendations as would most of the others. However even the larger group of potential art professionals will not be well served by art in public schools unless the modern myth is broken so that teachers and designers do not see themselves as secondary to the fine artist.

For a second group of art connected professionals Chapman's suggestions are less important. This group would include those who use visual skills in their occupations. It would include among others: people in advertising and marketing, anthropology and archeology, planners, theater people, and

decorators. Most of these people need to understand visual thinking from an analytic and cross cultural standpoint. It is particularly important that fine arts biases be broken so that they would benefit from Chapman's recommendations, for them to be really served much more must be done. While these people will not be artists the understanding they need in the visual arts is both broad and deep.

The art amatuers - collectors, museum goers, craft oriented people, Sunday artists - are served by current practice so long as they make things, but not served so well if they mostly look at things. Chapman's suggestions would improve circumstances for all these people.

If all the above three categories of clients for the visual arts programs in the public schools were taken together they still would represent only a fraction of those needing education in our society. The largest group that needs visual skills and knowledge are those people who need those skills as voters, concerned citizens, people decorating their homes, people trying to deal with what the media flings at them, people caught up in the conflict of images in a heterogeneous world. These people, just about everyone, have some use for and some reason to expect that our public schools will have a program in the visual arts which seriously attempts to impart the basic visual skills and understanding of how we express thoughts in and understand visual symbols. If the growing necessity for visual expertise was known and was associated with programs in the visual arts and if it were met with some degree of objectivity we could expect much more support for the arts in the public schools.

More importantly, those of us in the arts could rehumanize the visual arts by being more useful and more accepting.