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ABSTRACT

Theory and practice of the Cross-Cultural Arts Exhibit project initiated by the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Illinois) is described in this paper. The project was developed based on the concept of post-museum. Instead of transmitting values and knowledge, communication in the post-museum stresses the construction of meaning by active individual agents and celebrates diversity of viewpoints. The dialogical model of teaching diverse visual cultures, which is based on the pragmatic art theory of John Dewey and the hermeneutic art theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer, has been put in practice for cross-cultural classroom activities. Key features of the project are discussed in the paper, with concrete classroom examples provided. Includes three notes. Contains 18 references. (Author/BT)

Creating Cross-Cultural Exhibits in Schools

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Abstract

Theory and practice of the *Cross-Cultural Arts Exhibit* project initiated by the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is described. The project has been developed based on the concept of post-museum. Also, the dialogical model of teaching diverse visual cultures, which is based on the pragmatic art theory of John Dewey and the hermeneutic art theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer, has been put in practice for cross-cultural classroom activities. Key features of the project are discussed with concrete classroom examples.

Creating Cross-Cultural Exhibits in Schools

Over the last 25 years, there has been a movement toward forming a new identity of the museum as an educational institution. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) calls this new identity the "post-museum" in contrast to the modern concept of museum that was formed in the 19th century in Europe. Instead of working toward setting the canon of beauty as objective and authoritative, the post-museum plays an active role in establishing community in which dynamic communication takes place between the museum and the visitors, schools, and other institutions. Instead of transmitting values and knowledge, communication in the post-museum stresses the construction of meaning by active individual agents and celebrates diversity of viewpoints.

One of the key concepts that characterize the post-modern museum is "partnership." This concept is not new, and various types of partnerships have been explored according to particular purposes, such as partnerships in collecting and partnerships in exhibiting (Kavanagh, 1995). Through working in partnership, the museum shares and partakes in the dynamic process of making and remaking of a community.

Much discussion about partnership between museum and education in the 1990s has centered on the ways the museum and schools can work together. Toward what aim do the museum and schools develop partnerships? How do partnerships work in practice? What are the mechanisms and process of partnerships that would generate

meaningful educational outcomes? In the context of the post-museum, the theory and practice of partnerships are seen not as fixed but as an evolving process in which new thoughts and actions take place through the individual's critical reflection.

The Fred & Donna Giertz Education Center at Krannert Art Museum initiated the first of two cross-cultural traveling arts exhibits in 1996 as part of the museum's increased partnerships with local schools. Krannert Art Museum is the second largest public art museum in Illinois. It is located on the Campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and serves the entire downstate Illinois community. The Junior League of Champaign-Urbana and the Museum established the Resource Center in 1989, and the Center is dedicated to combining humanities and science instruction with art history and appreciation at all levels, from preschool through college. Its collection is based on the conviction that art from different periods and cultural settings can help students better understand the human experience and human aspirations.

The Resource Center, recently renamed the Giertz Education Center, continues to loan over 3,200 art and cultural resources at no charge to educators in public and private schools of all levels, preschool to adult learners. The collection of resources includes reproductions of art objects, poster prints, video recordings, slide sets, hands-on kits and books. Teachers use the resources to enhance and supplement the basic materials provided for them by their school district[1].

[1] Sixty-two percent of the current 800 registered users are East Central Illinois educators. Most of the others are University of Illinois students studying in education.

Like many other areas of the United States, the community of Champaign-Urbana holds a multi-ethnic population, and there is a serious demand for developing multicultural curricula in schools at the practical level. At the theoretical level, there is a new concept emerging in the fields of visual studies called "visual culture" that has redirected the theory and practice of arts education in the United States (Parsons, 2002). In discussing this concept, W. J. T. Mitchell (1995) emphasizes its dynamic movement toward shaping a new kind of visual discourse that includes cultural "Otherness," such as social studies and non-Western concepts and practices of the visual.

Reflecting both the practical and theoretical levels of educational discussion, the project has two goals.

1. To nourish an educational partnership for the purpose of enhancing children's ways of perceiving, understanding, and evaluating visual cultures unlike their own.
2. To develop an instructional model for developing activities about visual culture that would dispose children toward cultural engagement.

Since 1996 two projects have been implemented by the Giertz Education Center. One is *Power and Beauty: A Learning Module on African Art and Culture* and the other is *Japanese Culture, as Seen through Ukiyo-e.*

Power and Beauty: a Learning Module on African Art and Culture is a traveling exhibition of African art objects. The module is loaned for eight-week periods of time by

the Giertz Education Center to each of the four high schools and four middle schools in the Champaign and Urbana public school districts. The scheduled rotation allows each school to use it once every two years. The module assists middle and high school educators, in all curricula areas, in teaching units of study, which relate to African art and culture. The aim of the module is to stimulate both visual learning and creative engagement in education.

Each of the seventeen African art objects becomes a tool for opening a door into the diversity of African culture and histories. Eight enclosed cases display the African art objects. An 8 x 10" informational card accompanies each case and presents stimulating questions to encourage close examination of the objects. The cards also include a map and bibliographic references to information found in the more that fifty resources which accompany the exhibit. The display cases and cards are intended to be on display in a place at the school, such as the library, where the most classes and students can work with them. Several video recordings and slide sets travel with the exhibit, providing visual experiences for the study. The inclusion of audio recordings incorporates another significant element of the culture into the exhibit.

Japanese Culture, as seen through Ukiyo-e includes fourteen Ukiyo-e (multi-colored Japanese woodblock prints,). A broad range of Japanese culture can be studied using these original prints that were created during the mid-nineteenth century. The recent donation of fifty Ukiyo-e prints by Utagawaha Monjinkai to Krannert Art Museum

Resource Center provided Japanese woodblock prints for the development of the traveling exhibition on the art and culture of Japan[2].

Other hands-on resources that further illustrate the Japanese project are significant parts of the exhibition. The resources include books, video recordings, music CDs, posters, and slides. These resources allow teachers to use the exhibition without extensive searching for the background information of Japanese culture and art. The extensive number and diversity of resources allows for several teachers in each school to use the exhibit simultaneously during its loan. The Japanese project was tested by four elementary schools during the 2001/2002 school year, and it continues to be improved based on the evaluation of the project.

Key Educational Concepts

The *Cross-Cultural Arts Exhibits Project* is based on four ideas, hoping to realize the two goals described above.

1. The first idea is to create traveling arts exhibits for school use. A museum can provide suitable visual objects that are not always available to schools because of the shortage of finances, space, and management. As a partner to schools, the Giertz Education Center has provided them with visual objects through creating the traveling arts exhibits. In both the African and Japanese projects, the original art objects are supplied. This is intended to open up new possibilities of visual education and to help teachers enrich children's visual experience in a classroom. It is expected that instead of

[2] Utagawaha Monjinkai seeks to promote a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and to preserve the art

distancing themselves from the originals, children actively see, touch, and smell the originals. The exhibit is also organized in such a way that it facilitates interdisciplinary ways of understanding visual culture. The materials contained in the exhibit have included not only visual items, such as original art work, cultural objects, slides and poster reproductions, but also other kinds of materials, including music CDs, books, and video recordings.

2. The second idea is to organize a partnership with another institution. The partnership aims to promote conversation on educational issues among local institutions in such a way that the institutions accept responsibility along with schools for educating children in a community. In the project f *Japanese Culture, as seen through Ukiyo-e*, the museum organized a partnership with the Japan House, an institution of cultural studies affiliated with the University of Illinois. Serving as a partner of both schools and the museum, the Japan House provides cultural activities, including a tea ceremony, art workshops for teachers, and hosts a visiting artist for elementary schools.

3. The third idea is to bring a native person of a different culture to a classroom or museum so that a teacher or a docent can develop educational activities together with the native. It has been suggested in the studies of cross-cultural education that children should develop an affinity with different cultures by spending time with a native and

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of Ukiyo-e. Their goal is to present Ukiyo-e exhibitions and to donate a total of 10,000 authentic Ukiyo-e prints to educational facilities around the world.

working together (Satou, 1999). Such an affinity helps children to develop positive attitudes toward other cultures, which is beneficial to their future. Instead of knowing about different visual cultures based on textbook learning, children are encouraged to involve themselves in face-to-face communication with the native so that a new understanding about other cultures unfolds based on their own experience. Teachers are also encouraged to take part in this communication. Through interpersonal communication in which viewpoints are formed, exchanged, and evaluated in a continuous process, the teachers and children form a new perspective for interacting with different visual cultures.

4. The fourth idea is to establish a partnership between teachers and a researcher for enhancing classroom activities for visual culture. "A dialogical approach" for teaching visual culture, proposed by Nakamura (2002), has been implemented in classroom activities, and the units of lessons have been produced in collaboration with teachers and the researcher. Through arranging this kind of partnership and promoting communication between them, the Giertz Education Center has attempted to move beyond a traditional role of museum education as a provider of visual materials for schools. The Center has become one of the central places in a community that gathers educators and fosters discussions about how art and culture have been taught, how they ought to be taught, and how they might be taught. In discussion, educators at the different levels exchange, reflect on, and judge their perspective and imagine new

possibilities for teaching. By nourishing communication among educators at the various levels, the Center plays an active role in developing critical dialogue about visual culture in a community.

Dialogical Model of Teaching Visual Culture

One of the issues in teaching in a multicultural society is how to foster communication among different cultural groups. In the field of visual culture education, educational meanings of cultural "Otherness," such as non-Western concepts and practices, has been rigorously discussed. A way of promoting a mutual understanding among different cultures has been sought (Anderson, 1995; Barbosa, 1992; Clark, 1990; Okazaki, 2002; Hamblen, 1986; Mason, 1999; Smith, 1995; Zimmerman; 1990). In teaching visual culture, a critical issue is how to teach the students to understand a different visual culture from his or her own in such a way that he or she can go beyond the particular aesthetic vision without losing his or her cultural identity.

The pragmatic art theory of John Dewey (1934) and the hermeneutic art theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1996, 1986) provide us with a useful direction for developing such an understanding in a classroom (Nakamura, 2002). In their art theories, the experience of art is viewed as intercommunication or dialogue in which the viewer develops a deeper understanding about visual culture. The experience of art is neither for the objective understanding of visual culture nor for the subjective enjoyment. Instead, it

is "an event" that generates new meanings through the individual's critical seeing and thinking in a situation shared with the other.

In a dialogical model, knowledge, principles, and techniques of art are neither unchangeable across time and space nor external to a particular situation of the individual. They are likewise not considered as authoritative as the individual understands art. Instead, such knowledge, principles, and techniques are interpreted differently under the local circumstances in which the individual struggles for generating qualitative change. They can be questioned and evaluated from the individual's perspective for appreciation and creation of art. In a classroom informed by knowledge, principles, and techniques of art, the students are encouraged to highlight, select, and alter them through his or her critical examination of them. The students are engaged in active seeing and thinking, which fosters dialogue between the visual culture to be learned and his or her own appreciation and creation of art.

In the dialogical approach, dialogue between "what is other" and what is familiar is also essential. "What is other" means something unfamiliar and unexpected. This otherness provides the individual with opportunities for recognizing, questioning, and evaluating habituated ways of seeing and thinking. The otherness might be often encountered in visual objects from different cultures. The experience of art in a classroom is constructed in such a way that the youth's viewpoint, which emerges from his or her past experiences, is challenged and channeled toward the formation of a new

understanding of self, art, and culture. It is critical for the students to *form questions* about the unfamiliar and the unexpected so that a new perspective for understanding develops. Anything unfamiliar and unexpected in subject matter is constantly recognizable to both the students and the teacher. The recognition is based on the idea of art being re-organized and re-directed in such a way that the students can engage in re-forming his or her ways of seeing and thinking.

Dialogue is carried out in such a way that the individual develops commonality with various visual cultures and looks for differences. The nature of commonality and difference is not static but dynamic; the individual attempts to seek common and different points with other cultures in such a way that he or she recognizes diverse viewpoints in relation to his or hers. In understanding a visual object from a different culture, this understanding would not stop by finding the original meaning of the object. Nor would the individual impose his or her aesthetic viewpoint on the object. Instead, dialogical understanding unfolds in such a way that the individual adjusts his or her viewpoints and develops a new understanding that is open to change in the future. The student's critical interaction and speculation on the quality of the visual object in relation to the historical and cultural contexts facilitate the development of dialogue.

The individual's viewpoint plays an essential role in appreciating and speculating on the expressive quality of the visual object and forming a new understanding about visual culture. Through critically interacting with visual culture, the individual renews

the meanings of the past materials and begins to see them from a new perspective. In dialogue the individual is engaged in this renewal and transforms the horizon of seeing, thinking, and acting. In a classroom the students learn critically to see visual culture from their own viewpoints, instead of passively receiving information from the teacher. In the process of dialogue, they become aware of, reflect on, judge, and re-shape their viewpoint inseparable from their cultural backgrounds. If dialogue is successfully fulfilled, the students see the nature of self, world, and things with more insight and become able to interact with visual culture from a broader and deeper perspective.

The dialogical model of teaching has been used by some teachers who have participated in the *Cross-Cultural Arts Exhibits Project*. The researcher has collaborated with the teachers while they were using the exhibit. First, the researcher drafted the unit of cross-cultural lessons taking into account the curriculum of each school. Second, the teacher used the units with the help of the researcher in a classroom. Third, the unit was revised based on the critical reflection of both the teacher and researcher. This collaboration was aimed at facilitating not only teachers' understanding of the model but also the improvement of the dialogical model. The cross-cultural units produced in the project will be further evaluated through the other teachers' use in a classroom.

Theory into Practice

Barkstall Elementary School[3] is one of the schools that have participated in the museum project, *Japanese Art, as seen through Ukiyo-e*, in 2001/2002. The educational mission at Barkstall Elementary School is *Education through the Arts;* arts are integrated into the school curriculum. The core goal of the school is to prepare each student for becoming a responsible participant in the diverse, changing society, and the arts education curriculum stresses learning about diverse visual cultures.

The school developed the Japan Project in the fall semester of 2001 in integration with all the aspects of the museum project. Viki Ford, visual arts specialist, and other teachers at Barkstall used the exhibit materials, partnered with the Japan House, collaborated with Kazuyo Nakamura, a native Japanese, and used the dialogical model of teaching.

The exhibit's materials were used for both classroom activities and the school exhibit, based on each teacher's curriculum plan. Hoping to give students daily access to the visual objects of Japan, the materials were exhibited at the hall display cases and at the main entrance where the Japan Project was introduced to the public. This daily exhibit was aimed to create the environment at the school in which students would

[3] Barkstall Elementary School was founded in 1997 as a school of choice to serve the growing population in Champaign. The racial/ethnic backgrounds of the 478 student body population are 61.2 percent White, 28.6 percent Black, 2 percent Hispanic, 7.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander and .7 percent Native American. Low-income students make up 21.7 percent of the school population.

become visually acquainted with Japanese culture. The exhibit was accompanied by Japanese music, changing the ambience of the school.

One or two topics of Japanese art were chosen for art learning for each grade level. Kindergarten and the first graders worked on *Sumi-e* painting and Japanese screens. They learned how to draw simple Japanese characters, animals, and landscapes with brushes and ink on rice paper, and learned how this kind of drawing is different from drawing with a pencil. In learning about Japanese screens, they not only created their original screen but also learned two aesthetic characteristics of Japanese paintings. One was the use of asymmetrical design, and another was the selection of the momentary scene as the subject matter of the painting. The second graders focused on printmaking, *Gyotaku,* or fish prints. They learned about block printing and created an accordion folded book comprised of their prints. The third graders learned about *Bunraku*, a Japanese puppet theater tradition with Japanese folk tales. The fourth graders studied *Ikebana,* the art of flower arrangement, and created the ceramic *Ikebana* container. An *Ikebana* artist was invited to the classroom. She demonstrated different types of arrangements and explained the importance of seasonal change in the theme of *Ikebana* arrangement. The fourth and fifth split classroom learned *Jomon* pottery and created ceramic containers. Students reflected on the *Jomon* designs inspired by the natural environment and made their original designs for their pottery.

Art activities in a classroom were organized by taking into account the four aspects of the dialogical model. An art project about Japanese tea ceremony and tea bowls, which was designed for the fifth graders, is used here to demonstrate how classroom activities were developed based on the model. The tea ceremony is one of the representative cultural rituals of Japan, and it was hoped that through learning about this topic students would broaden and deepen their ways of seeing and thinking about visual culture.

In the beginning of the project, we talked about how we normally perceive the use of tea in daily life. This activity reflects one of the aspects of dialogical model; dialogue with another culture is developed based on students' own viewpoints. In a classroom, students filled in a worksheet that asked questions: "When do you drink a cup of tea?", "What kind of tea do you drink?", "Draw a cup or bowl for tea you often use at home." This worksheet was aimed at helping students recognize the use of tea in their everyday life. It was also intended to find useful information for organizing the subsequent dialogue in a classroom.

Japanese tea bowls were introduced to students in such a way that students can see how they are used in the original cultural context. This reflects another aspect of the model. Ideas about beauty embodied in tea bowls are developed in the context of the Way of Tea. The Way of Tea is an approach to spiritual cultivation through participating in a tea ceremony, and it stresses the practice of four principles: harmony, respect, purity,

and tranquility (Sen, 1997). Such a concept of the Way of Tea is hard for American children to understand. A native Japanese was invited to the class. She presented a brief history of a tea ceremony. There is no such activity in the United States that is similar to the tea ceremony, and students eagerly asked questions about a having a ceremonial tea. The ceremony segment of the Japanese movie, *Rikyu,* was shown to the class. It served as an introduction to the quiet and ceremonious qualities of the Way of Tea. Students were asked to compare the serving of tea in American culture with the Japanese tea ceremony.

In the project students were encouraged to form critical questions about visual culture of Japan. For example, when students watched the video, they were asked to find anything unusual in a tea ceremony and to ask critical questions. Their questions included: "Why was it quiet at the tea ceremony?", "Why do they take turns drinking?", and "What is the meaning of the flower in the tea ceremony?" These questions revealed what students were unfamiliar with and opened up opportunities for learning. This strategy of teaching was used throughout the project. When Japanese tea bowls were introduced to students, they formed questions about the aesthetic quality. Informed of the historical and cultural contexts, they speculated on why Japanese craftsmen chose particular ideas about beauty for the creation of tea bowls. Japanese appreciate the nature and make use of aspects of the nature in creating their art (Yanagi, 1989). For example, if they see the nature of clay in its plasticity, they may emphasize this plasticity in

designing tea bowls. If they see the nature of glaze in its fluidity, they may attempt to show this fluidity as part of the design.

Students were also provided with opportunities for forming their own interpretations about visual culture and finding critical ideas about their own creation of art. For example, before making tea bowls, students thought critically about what would make their tea bowls beautiful in reference to Japanese tea bowls. They said: "My tea bowl will not be perfect.", "It will be a plain form.", "I will use a cracking glaze.", "I will use it and drink out of it.", "I will use it at a tea ceremony.", "I will work hard on it.", and "It will be made by my own hands." This opportunity was taken in a form of dialogue with other students that would stimulate their ideas and help them develop their own ideas.

At the end of the semester, the students took a field trip to Japan House and were served tea in their own tea bowls in a traditional way. Students had seen a tearoom on a poster print from the traveling exhibit, but the experience of being at Japan House and seeing the actual tearoom was a totally different experience. The fifth graders put together what they had seen in the movie *Rikyu* with their personal experiences. By participating in this cultural activity, which cannot be provided at school, they came to appreciate Japanese art and culture more deeply.

The project is aimed at broadening and deepening students' perspective for understanding about art and culture. As educators, we all hope to see change in students'

ways of seeing and thinking as outcome of teaching. What each student learned from the project is different from each other, reflecting individual differences. At the end of the project, students reflected on their learning and found for themselves new ideas about art and culture. They wrote: "Beauty is inside of us. We all see beauty differently.", "I learned everybody has a different point of view.", "To one person a bowl might be ugly but to someone else it might be beautiful.", and "It changes the way I think of Japanese people because I really like tea ceremonies." In order to make the change possible, it is crucial for educators to cooperate with each other beyond the boundaries of institutions, such as schools, museums, and universities.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Krannert Art Museum education project, *Cross-Cultural Arts Exhibits*, is to develop educational partnerships that will be helpful in enriching the young people's experience of visual culture beyond the wall of the museum. The project encourages intercommunication among educators. Such intercommunication should nourish a reflective community of art and culture. The development of such a project is to be seen as dynamic and organic. The project will be re-shaped and changed through critical dialogue among the students, teachers, museum educators, and researchers. It is the very process of creating a new image of the museum in a democratic society, which moves beyond the modernist's concept of the museum.

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