Rethinking Relevance in Art Education:
Paradigm Shifts and Policy Problematics in the Wake of the Information Age

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Abstract
This article addresses the advocacy of organizations like the National Art Education Association who seek greater legislative support, funding and time allocations to be devoted to arts instruction and the development of arts practices in the arena of public education. The author argues the timeliness of a reconceived paradigm for understanding and advocating the relevancy of arts practices in the wake of the Information Age. This article seeks to rethink the semiotics defining art in an era of shifting paradigms and as contextualized in contemporary educational policy.

Introduction

This article addresses the advocacy for greater legislative support, funding and time allocations to be devoted to arts instruction and the development of arts practices in the arena of public education. Organizations like the National Art Education Association (NAEA) along with individual practitioners, researchers, and teachers of all walks have long been engaged in a struggle to make the argument that the arts are necessary for human development and innovation, not just nice to have around (Eisner, 2002), and not merely an unjustifiable and humanist pleasure that exists only for the sake of those who enjoy them (Fish, 2008).

Signs of the Times

I advance the thesis that any advocacy for the arts in the wake of the Information Age must first argue for a paradigm that defines the arts in terms that connote meanings strikingly different than that of "a source of intrinsic satisfaction," "a shaper of feeling," or an object of great "aesthetic quality" for the betterment of our daily lives (Broudy, 1966, p. 21). A semiotic turn is required.

Semiotics is characterized as the "translation of content from one sign system into another" or from one system of networked meanings to another (Suhor, 1984, p. 250). Charles S. Peirce, the originator of the semiotic theory of signs, described a sign as "something by knowing which we know something more" (Hardwick, 1977, p. 31). Umberto Eco (1976) writes that, "A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else" (p. 7). Pragmatically speaking, we reason "from sign to sign" in order to better understand a concept and surround it more fully (Smith-Shank, 1995, p. 235). The umbrella of understandings produced by a sign system constitutes a paradigm. A paradigm models a pattern of signs and meanings that is consistently self-similar. As long as a system of semiotic exemplars is embraced as significantly informative, the resultant paradigm may continue to act as a watershed against competing systems of understanding.

Broadsides in the Contest for Semiotic Relevance

NAEA policy broadsides seek to increase public support for arts and art education policies (NAEA, 2008). I was struck by the semiotics at work in the language and meaning of these broadsides, most of which are couched around the plea: "Where's The Art? Yet if their intended audience operate under the umbrella of a paradigm that fails to recognize a deficit of art in their homes, social settings, and public school curricula, that audience will see no sense in making the study of the arts an equal priority to other

academic subjects. A plea for *more* art would prove to be an ineffective advocacy gambit. Other NAEA policy broadsides feature the questions "Why Teach Art?" and "Why Study Art?" But these are also likely to be ineffective pleas if their intended audience assumes the answers to these questions consigns students to activities in which to creatively express themselves or learn the names and works of famous artists. In these pleas, the arts are cast simultaneously as an academic subject appropriate for the agenda of public education and also as an academic subject for which relevancy is held in question.

How have certain policies regarding the arts in education come into being and why do they persist? Connotation and collaterality is heavily at work in any semiotic system (Barthes, 1973; Baker, 1985; Eagleton, 1983). Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) offers insight into the role of connotation and collaterality in semiotics by emphasizing the combinatory possibilities between the signs within a system of signs; Saussure describes these combinatory possibilities as *syntagmatic relations*. For instance, however one defines art will also dictate how one defines the concepts of artist, artwork, art history, art education, arts policy, and arts advocacy. The dynamics of these kinds of connotation and collaterality in semiotically derived understandings produces Buczynska-Garewicz's (1981, p. 188) "chain of interpretation" and Eco's (1976, p. 68) "unlimited semiosis." This characterization coincides with Daniel McCool's (1995) explication of the fluid parameters of public policy, explaining that "policy does not exist in discrete units; it is part of a complex system without clear demarcations"(p. 4).

But just as important to the premise of this article is Saussure's explication of the oppositional properties in semiotically derived understandings. Saussure described the contrastive properties of sign systems as *paradigmatic oppositions* wherein "the choice of one term necessarily excludes the other" (Silverman, 2007, p. 71). Art educator Harold Pearse (1983; 1992) has developed a framework for examining oppositional sign systems defining thought and action in the practice of art education. Pearse's framework began as an interpolation of the work of Canadian curriculum theorist Ted Aoki (1978). Aoki originally sought to adapt Jürgen Habermas's (1971) philosophical inquiry into the paradigms of human knowing in order to inform his own teaching and writing.

According to Pearse (1983), there are at least three prevailing paradigms of thought and action in art education that oppose one another in shaping an understanding of what art is. An empirical-analytic paradigm defines art as a system of *production*, a cause and effect intervention into a stockpile of empirical and manipulable elements, a commodity-oriented process "that has as its basic intent a cognitive interest in the control of objects in the world" (Pearse, 1983, p. 159). An interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm defines art as a system of *communication*, the expression of situated knowledge about a person's relationship with his or her social world (Pearse, 1983, p. 160). A critical-theoretic

paradigm defines art as a system of *reflection*, a relativist and liberatory activity rendering invisible assumptions, values, and norms newly visible "in order to transform" unjust social relations and empower marginalized individuals and communities within the practitioner's social world (Pearse, 1983, p. 161). In each of these cases, arts practices signify ways of knowing within varying semiotic systems that coexist, but do so oppositionally. Of these three semiotic systems, it is the empirical-analytic paradigm that has dominated in defining art and collateral arts policies throughout the modern era.

Arts Paradigms in Modernity and Postmodernity

In the modern era, our perception of the arts remained anchored in an Age of Exploration ethos when Western art-making was "an instrument of knowledge but…also an instrument of [material] possession" (Claude Lévi-Strauss quoted in Berger, 1972, p. 86). The empirical-analytic mindset of the Exploration Age generated a tenacious definition of art that conflated the sensuousness of raw material with industrialist and capitalist empire-building practices, turning works of art into commodities, collector's items and symbols of status. The arts, defined as commodities and possessed as totem-like objects fetishizing empiricism and materiality, were commissioned or otherwise acquired at great cost to be displayed in special halls or in royal or papal courts, and collected in cabinets of curiosity with other natural objects. The commoditization of art objects ultimately served to privilege guild-associated or academically-trained artisanship; the mastery of medium-specific skills and techniques in the production of such objects; the prominence of galleries, exhibition halls, museums and marketplaces to display the quality and/or rarity of either the materials or the exploits involved in crafting and/or appropriating such objects; and the designation of aesthetic beauty ascribed to those objects that most the effectively or completely depicted the empirical world, served as evidence of scientifically scripted hierarchies, or had the apparent hallmarks of individual creative genius superseding the norm.

Policy rooted in such a definition yields a predilection for institutionalized cultural reservoirs preserving objects declared to be great works of art and the masterpieces of Western civilization, framed in contradistinction to display cases full of anthropologically authenticated artifacts. Critical theorist and social philosopher Theodor W. Adorno (1991) pointed out how the modernist commoditization of the art object as masterpiece and the artist as individual creative genius in evidence, for instance, in events like the U.S. Kennedy Center Honors, perpetuates the zeitgeist of goodwill toward the idea of art as cultural product. Along with this goodwill comes a false sense of security for the masses that arts products are being preserved and that society's artistic coffers are full—both those arts promoted as being regarded with the highest esteem in Western culture, and those arts that are advertised as the culture's most popular forms of entertainment.

Richard Kearney (1988) makes the pronouncement that "modernity is where we grew up," but "postmodernity is where we now live" (p. 18). In the contest for semiotic relevance between opposing definitions of art, Pearse (1992) went on to suggest a new system for conceptualizing the thought and action originated through arts practices by arguing that we are now in the midst of a postparadigmatic era, "one in a constant state of flux, a kind of perpetual pluralism" of opposing paradigms (p. 250). Steven Connor (1996) summarizes the thesis of Jean-François Lyotard's (1984) book *The Postmodern Condition* as follows:

> The postmodern condition comes about with the collapse of or extreme skepticism toward…universalizing metanarratives. In place of a single narrative of the unfolding of an essential humanity, Lyotard proposes a multiplicity of different histories and local narratives that is incapable of being summarized or unified into one all-encompassing story. (Connor, 1996, p. 431)

Pearse (1992) describes our postmodern condition as a postparadigmatic paradigm where "earlier paradigms continue to exist as both historical artifacts and governing perspectives for some people" (p. 249). Thus, we are said to be in an era when no one paradigm of thought and action is able to dominate, where oppositional paradigms have reached an equivalence that cause them to grate upon one another like great tectonic plates, wearing each other down into localized narratives and constantly rearranging fragments of meaning. If we accept the assumption of a semiotic system that both consumes prior signs and creates new signs in the process, it suggests that we are in the midst of a de/re/constructive paradigm. Such a paradigm would enable a particular redefinition of art most suitable for achieving an increase in current public support for arts and art education policies.

I argue that art-making may effectively be reinterpreted as a system of *information*, a social process interrogating "the relationship between ideas and art" so as to de-emphasize "the value traditionally accorded to the materiality of art objects" in favor of exploring the social "preconditions for how meaning emerges in art, seen as…[varying] semiotic system[s]" (Shanken, 2002, p. 434). What kinds of policies towards the arts ought we to pursue if we are in the midst of a postparadigmatic condition redefining the arts as a system producing the myriad meaning-making processes that inform the human condition?

Policy, Purpose, and Habits of Mind

Exploring policy is not fanciful; policy exploration is always a pragmatic exercise since policies are designed to ensure the good of the many. Such purposes are rooted in philosophies and worldviews. Lankford (1992) lists "five aims of philosophy of art

education" (p. 197) as follows: "to justify our reason for being"…such that our goals are so unimpeachable that "society will feel compelled to support us with salaries, supplies, classrooms, and…mandate that all its children shall study under our tutelage" (p. 197); "to clarify ideas" articulating our purposes, our assumptions, and biases so that our policies reflect our goals with as much internal consistency as possible; "to synthesize ideas" bringing contemporary art education into growing rapprochement and agreement "with other fields of inquiry and social forces" (p. 198); "to recommend…the *shoulds* and *oughts* of art education," the policies that evolve from the empirical analysis required to clarify our claims and ideas, and the speculation required to bring about new theoretical syntheses (p. 198); and finally "to raise questions" that enlarge our conception of what is possible in education, of what content should be taught, to whom it should be taught, and under what circumstances (p. 199).

Art educators must readdress the semiotics of art ideas and art-making actions along with the collateral meanings and oppositional language surrounding these ideas, practices and products before we can expect policies about the arts in education to change for the better. The principles of semiotics suggest that there are habits of mind, habitual interpretations as it were, or "collateral experience" (Smith-Shank, 1995), which limits the ability of policy-makers and legislators from defining or understanding the arts in any way other than they already see them. Saussure is helpful once again in his emphasis that "no meaning exists in a single item" but that definitions and meanings are derived from how signs and events interact (cited in Silverman, 2007, p. 72). Fomenting a semiotic sea change requires more than just the awareness that the study of language changes language or that the study of the language about a concept changes the reading of that concept. Art educator jan jagodzinski (1991) has suggested a first step:

> We should examine cultural practices as signifying systems, as practices of representation, not as the production of beautiful things evoking beautiful feelings. Art-texts produce meanings and positions from which those meanings are *consumed*…If we replace production for *creation* then we can begin to get at the social conditions; if we replace consumption for *reception* we can begin to politicize the act of seeing. The entire syllabus changes when we see art as a form of *social practice*. (p. 149)

This article aims to be just such an examination of the signifying systems that define art and collateral arts policies. But writing this article alone will have no effect on public policies; in order to change policies, habits and actions must be transformed. The interaction of changes in signs and events, habits and actions will ultimately de/re/construct policy approaches as well.

The Semiotics of Policy Change

Ralph Smith (1978) described policy as an enterprise "always addressed to *actions*," staking effective policymaking to the philosophical groundwork of a pragmatist epistemology (p. 37). In other words, policy-makers and legislators call it as they see it, designing policies that "determine, organize, regulate, or *systematize* activities in order to bring about that *state of affairs* which marks a policy's purpose (Smith, 1978, p. 37, emphasis in original). Thus, to change a policy presumes a need to initiate action that has new and necessary relevance. Logically, if policies require newfound relevance in order to be effectual, prior policies have likely become less than relevant; systems have reached a point where they need to be rebooted.

Hans Löfgren (1997) presents a "model of semiotic change" insistent "that the sign is always subject to change and that it must ultimately be defined in terms of semiotic boundaries" (p. 256). Löfgren's model is useful in that it is framed as a "discursive intervention," constituting "a method that analyzes change *within* the sign rather than *in terms* of the sign" (p. 246). If we want to effect change in the public policies advocating the arts, policies that are collateral to contiguous and yet oppositional paradigms defining art and arts practice, we must first explore the interaction between the paradigms themselves.

The Methodology is the Message

The arts practices in an empirical-analytic paradigm stem from habits producing beautiful forms and techniques to evoke the beautiful as determined by those who assume the power to be the arbiters of good taste (jagodzinski, 1991; Stankiewicz, 2001). The arts practices in an interpretive-hermeneutic paradigm stem from habits closely describing "the ways in which we immediately experience an intimacy with the living world, attending to its myriad textures, sounds, flavors, and gestures" through a selected symbolic medium (Cancienne & Snowber, 2003, p. 238). The arts practices in a critical-theoretic paradigm stem from habits challenging "the taken-for-granted theories and concepts that govern our disciplines and circumscribe our thinking" in order to reveal "the ongoing inequity and social injustice that shape our society" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 11). In the effort to rethink art education, I would like to advance the argument that the arts practices in a postparadigmatic paradigm stem from habits organizing ideas like those aforementioned, which are both in flux and from a plurality of sources, into useful and desirable information.

According to library and "information architect" Alex Wright (2007), information is "the juxtaposition of data to create meaning" (p. 10). In a postparadigmatic model, arts

practices inform the human condition by constituting and reconstituting practice-based methodologies for juxtaposing sensory, phenomenal, and cultural data. This is data that has been deemed significant enough for preservation, further inquiry and wider proliferation. Moreover, a postparadigmatic model for redefining the arts and rethinking arts policies deemphasizes Saussurian *paradigmatic oppositions* in favor of Saussurian *syntagmatic relations*. A postparadigmatic paradigm provides safe harbor for other paradigms to persist since it is the juxtaposition of definitions and concepts across paradigms that becomes the necessary fodder for new art-making methodologies to be made. Juxtapositions of formal art elements syntagmatically across paradigms to blend with either phenomenological experience or critical theoretic intent generate reorganizations of human data in a postparadigmatic paradigm where the methodology itself becomes the message (Marshall, 2008).

Organizing Information Through Arts Practices

In redefining the arts as a system producing meaning-making processes that inform the human condition, we must consider the data. Alex Wright (2007) defines information as much more than the mere cognition of data. Data itself is nothing more than relatable facts and elements collected for future reference and use. It is the organization of data that recasts it as information. Moreover, it is the *affect* that may be generated by the organization of such data—that is, the ability of particular configurations of data to inform personal emotions and stimulate the formation of new public memories, discourse, and beliefs—which ultimately perpetuates both the significance and the longevity of that data.

The empirical-analytic, interpretive-hermeneutic, critical-theoretic, and postparadigmatic paradigms mentioned throughout this paper are each information systems. As Wright (2007) explains it, nature and natural behavior in humans and animals is rife with information systems, evidence of a widespread biological imperative to "preserve information beyond the life of the individual organism through social imitation, and by encoding memes onto their physical environments" (p. 19). At the molecular level, DNA is no more than a genetic information system. At the behavioral level, the preservation of information held sacred, significant, or simply more salient than the steady drone of stimuli that would otherwise drive us to distraction leads us to a discussion of the creative acts that serve to anchor our attentions.

The very same data, when organized in a different system, is capable of informing with entirely new meaning. Like the letter C, which makes completely different sense depending on the alphabetical writing system it is inserted in, or on whether it represents a musical note, an algebraic expression, or a position on a chessboard, it is in the myriad

juxtapositionings of data within systems that we create the meanings we read and respond to. Arts practices are a human behavior that organizes information through very distinct medium-specific, experientially representative, and/or theory-laden methodologies. For example, Edvard Munch organized information about human suffering in paint on a canvas differently than Käthe Kollwitz organized such information in her prints and public sculptures, and differently again than Alvin Ailey organized such information through his dance choreography.

Systems of information usually coexist in the form of networks and hierarchies, for example in the way that "human memory can be explained as a system of nested hierarchies running atop a neural network" (Wright, 2007, p. 7). Networked and hierarchical systems for ordering data are described as follows:

> A hierarchy is a system of nested groups. For example, an organization chart is a kind of hierarchy, in which employees are grouped into departments, which are in turn grouped into higher-level organizational units, and so on. Other kinds of hierarchies include government bureaucracies, biological taxonomies, or a system of menus in a software application…A network, by contrast, emerges from the bottom up; individuals function as autonomous nodes, negotiating their own relationships, forging ties, coalescing into clusters. There is no "top" in a network; each node is equal and self-directed. Democracy is a kind of network; so is a flock of birds, or the World Wide Web. (Wright, 2007, p. 7)

Just as a particular juxtapositioning organizes data into particular information, alter that juxtapositioning and you have altered the organizing narrative and the likely reading and response to that data. A hierarchical organization of data yields a specific reading, from a starting data set to concluding data set; a networked organization of data clusters its data rhizomatically, yielding multiple impressions of meaning that alter depending on the perspective.

Beyond the arts practices, some information is organized with such hierarchical precision and equative balance as to awe us with the order in the universe; no matter where you stand, without ambiguity, one locomotive engine pulls the rest of the cars one by one behind it. The progression of ideas in various branches of the sciences comes to mind. On the other hand, some information is organized to access a network of collateral traditions and connotations and to trigger a torrent of empathy for those who likewise suffer the follies of the human experience. For instance, Francisco de Goya's depiction of a massacre of Spanish civilians by Napoleon's troops in *The Third of May 1808* networks historical data and imagined details painted with an assurance networking this masterpiece to the work of the Old Masters of 17th century Europe. The painting also networks recollections of centuries of paintings depicting the crucifixion of an innocent

Christ to a particular split second in between the volleys of a firing squad. Depictions of common folk in the canon of Western art history are networked to viewer's memories of family and friends in unjust situations. Whatever the intent of the organizing system, information is always organized for a recurring purpose: to be literally re-cognizable, so as to be easily recalled to memory and thus retain its significance.

This brings us around once again to the notion of the arts as an organizing system of the most human information of all—data impressed with social imperatives and emotional meaning. Information wrought from and melded into manufactured forms, cultural symbolism, and liberatory frameworks are richly complex hierarchies and networks of data. Oral, visual, written and performance arts practices depicting heroes and monsters, gods and earth mothers, migrations and holy men, elements and alchemies, the sciences and religions, injustices and fragile ecologies together constitute some of the most dynamic strategies at our disposal for the conservation and recycling of the data that most effectively informs human beings of who we are, where we come from, what our purpose is, and where we may be going.

The Arts in the Wake of the Information Age

In his article *Art Education for New Times*, Paul Duncum (1997) defines and describes the cultural ramifications of the Information Age. The Information Age was that period over the last quarter of the 20th century that saw the rapid globalization of information and communication technologies and the proliferation of the ability to digitize and manipulate information and its traffic. The cultural developments of these new times include: "the treatment of culture as an ordinary, material commodity; the proliferation of electronic visual images; and, the multifaceted construction of individual identity" (Duncum, 1997, p. 69). The resultant social effects of this glut of data have been described as follows:

> Human beings now produce more than [5,000,000,000,000 megabytes] worth of recorded information per year: documents, e-mail messages, television shows, radio broadcasts, Web pages, medical records, spreadsheets, presentations, books…That is 50,000 times the number of words stored in the Library of Congress, or more than the total number of words ever spoken by human beings. Seventy-five percent of that information is digital…As the proliferation of digital media accelerates, we are witnessing profound social, cultural, and political transformations whose long-term outcome we cannot begin to foresee. (Wright, 2007, p. 6)

Consequently, there has been a reorientation of traditional canons and worldviews within contemporary visual arts and art education disciplinary practices so as to now draw upon

and consider the vast traffic of visuality, material culture tropes, and media messages that mark our era (Elkins, 2003; Fischman, 2001; Foster, 1988; Freedman, 2003; Mirzoeff, 2002; McLuhan, 1964/1994). This paradigm shift, mining the potential of new juxtapositions, has also become the source of vigorous debate within the art education field in recent years over what is art content and what is non-art content (Duncum, 2001; Freedman, 2000; Kamhi, 2003; Smith, 2003).

Harold Pearse (1992) cautioned that art educators "cannot operate the same way in a world revolutionized by communication technology and depersonalized consumerism in which we are inundated by the products of the mass media that cause us to constantly question what is real…[and] what is original" (p. 248). A significant number of art educators, well aware of the contemporary shift to a postmodern and postparadigmatic paradigm, have already embraced the opportunity to change the way we organize the data. It has not been a coincidence that the push for Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) has heightened during the global tilt from an Exploration and Industrial Age ethos into an Information Age ethos. This article however is not an argument for VCAE, but rather for the semiotic reinterpretation of the definitions of art that the rise of VCAE has helped to reveal. Caught up in what designer Richard Saul Wurman calls a "tsunami of data" (cited by Wright, 2007, p. 6), where do art educators go from here?

Redefining Art as a System for Organizing Data That Reveals the Human Condition

> Genuine change—change without repetition—has to involve *integration:* the construction of the new upon the old even as the old is, in this process, reconstructed. (Löfgren, 1997, p. 264)

Pearse (1992) advises that every art educator in this postmodern era "needs to be versed in semiotics and methods for decoding sign systems" (p. 250). The preceding quote from Löfgren is reflective of the inherent utility in drawing upon the syntagmatic constitution of a postparadigmatic paradigm in order to foment a semiotic sea change facilitating the public's understanding of the arts as a system for organizing data that compellingly tells the human condition. Keeping in mind that the most enduring information is information that deeply impresses both our cognitive *and* affective awareness, I propose policies that promote the arts as a means *to better inform* ourselves about the things that matter the most to us as local and international communities. The arts enhance human information, recalling and refining the cargoes of meaning our collected data carries in tow. Based upon a postparadigmatic reconception of the arts, this is information that may be organized around canonized art objects and conventional art-making techniques, a plurality of cultural tropes, and/or iconoclastic themes of social critique in any combination and without partiality.

Arts-based methodologies for organizing human data effectively inform not because they are beautiful, but are beautiful because they carry a berth for our emotions and enthrall our attention, making them altogether effective at delivering their memetic cargo. The arts connect us bodily to ideas that make sense to us. Hence, I suspect that beauty, wherever it is attributed, lies in the re-cognition of the data that most directly informs and validates the story of one's life. For example, the words of a printed obituary tell of a death, but Mozart's final Requiem Mass validates and informs in ways that bind the facts surrounding a life that has passed with an unforgettably sublime expression of grief.

While revising an early draft of this article, I happened across the following diagram of a promising new method developed by Syracuse University researchers for delivering insulin to the body through oral dosages rather than through injections. Delivery is accomplished by binding insulin peptides to biomolecules of vitamin B_{12}, protecting the insulin as it passes through the walls of the gastrointestinal tract until it is able to reach the bloodstream.
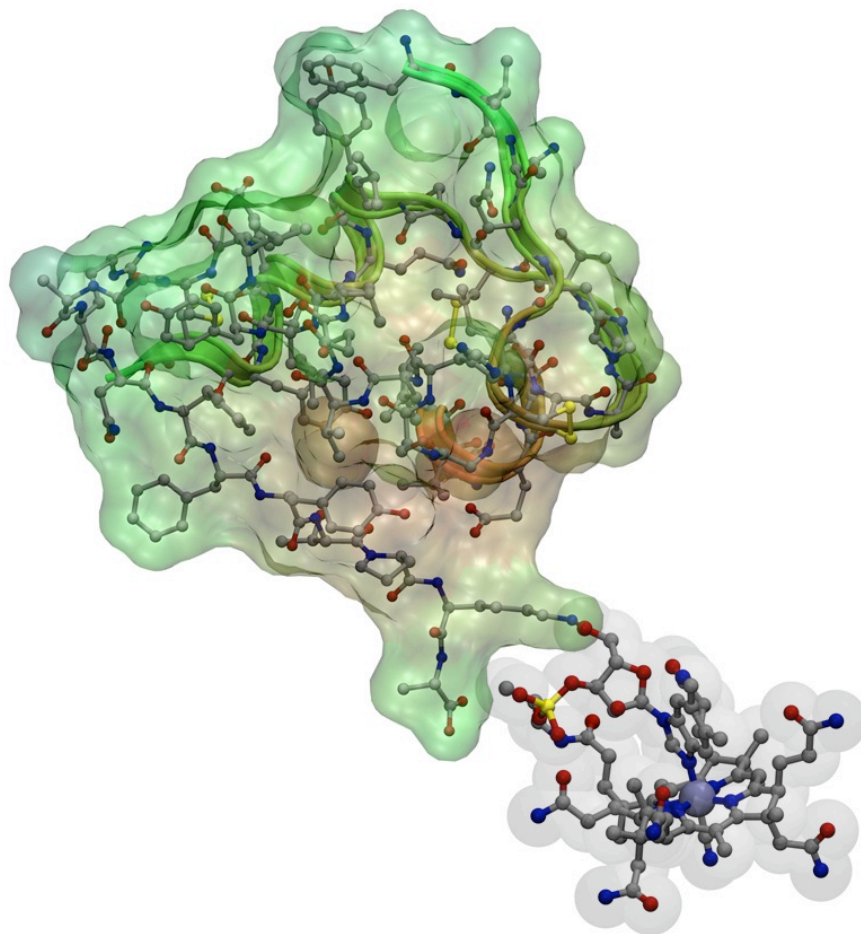

Figure 1: Vitamin B_{12} as a Carrier for the Oral Delivery of Insulin
Doyle, R.P., Petrus, A.P., Vortherms. A.R., and Fairchild. T.J. (2007). Vitamin B_{12} as a carrier for the oral delivery of insulin, *ChemMedChem*, *2*, 1717-21.

This image serves as an unexpected metaphor for the effective organization of data about the human experience and the natural world when that data is bound to a methodology that makes art of life and carries that data safely through the boundaries of language, through cultural divides and the passing years. By attaching some elemental form or cultural trope or just idea (the insulin peptide) to an idiosyncratic new methodology for making art (the protective B_{12} biomolecule), the commonplace is made significant and its ability to inform is made more complex, durable, and ultimately more transportable as meaning throughout the corpus of human social interaction.

Methodology is defined "as the entire research process from problem identification to data analysis" (Creswell, 1994, p. xvii). Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund (2008) have defined arts-based research in education as the "*arts for scholarship's sake*. (p. 1). In my own pedagogical practice I have watched a sixth grader sifting through commonplace materials such—wood scraps and bolts—as part of her methodology for crafting the facsimile of a life-sized little girl. I have supported a fourth grader as he duplicated and reflected on the significance of a commonplace cultural artifact—a U.S. passport—as part of his methodology for representing personal freedom, social mobility, and family identity. And I have witnessed a third grader reinterpreting a commonplace critique—the injustice of bullying—in an iteration of a political cartoon, part of his methodology offering subtext to a rendered standoff between forest animals and an army of bulldozers. In each of these instances of young students extending their scholarship in the art studio, the methodology became the message.

Suggested Policies Advocating a New Relevance for Arts Education

Once the arts are thus redefined, policies reconceptualizing the relevance of the arts begin to reveal themselves. I propose that the targeted audience should first be fellow arts practitioners and arts educators before focusing on the public at large. Löfgren suggests a compelling reason for this strategy:

> Social change…always has consequences for the relation of individual and societal. Change liberates the individual from embedding, or recontainment, in the societal. This makes social change dependent on an individual process that has two phases: the articulation of newly liberated individuality and its reinstitutionalization into society. (Löfgren, 1997, p. 263)

Connecting Löfgren's suggestion to Lankford's (1992) "five aims of philosophy of art education," I believe arts practitioners and arts educators have the unique opportunity in this day and age to show what an *informing* arts practice allows us to accomplish. Our newly liberated individuality as arts practitioners and educators will consequently yield new arts education policies that reconceptualize the justification of "our reason for being," clarify and synthesize ideas, "recommend…the *shoulds* and *oughts* of art

education," and "raise questions" that enlarge our conception of what is possible in education. Rather than advocacy broadsides asking questions no one outside our field is seeking to answer, I suggest that we make some bold claims and provide the information that warrants those claims. I am proposing several suggestions to start.

The Arts are a Renewable Resource. Refresh Yourself!
Tell the story of Julia Marshall's (2008) postparadigmatic definition of art as conceptual collage, the artist as bricoleur creating ideas from diverse and seemingly incompatible arrays of available things, and the arts practices as "strategies of juxtaposition, decontextualization, and blending" (p. 40). In a postparadigmatic paradigm, arts policy should focus less on the idea of the arts as precious objects, events, and legacies to be preserved intact, and more on the idea of the arts as a generator of new innovation, refreshing old data in array of cross-disciplinary contexts.

The Arts Work To Save Lives and Ecologies
Tell the story of Potters for Peace, an organization of ceramic artists developing innovative and aesthetically designed water-filtering ceramic technology in juxtaposition with public health and social justice concerns in order to confront the number one killer of children worldwide, unsanitary drinking water[1]. In a postparadigmatic paradigm, arts advocacy should focus less on the idea of the arts as historical artifact, and give equal light to the arts as a source generating contemporary solutions for age-old problems.

The Arts Work To Keep Technology Interfaces Human
Tell the work of art educators Stephen Carpenter and Pamela Taylor (2003) and their juxtaposition of autobiographical and education theory data in the creation of computer hypertext utilizing text, images, and video in response to Jasper Johns's 1983 painting *Racing Thoughts*. In a postparadigmatic paradigm, arts practice in art education develops methodologies for coming to terms with living in "a technomediated culture that has changed forever the way we see" and a means to generate new methods for "informing and being informed by" works of art "in a way that reflects the technomediated culture in which we live" (Carpenter & Taylor, 2003, p. 48).

The Arts Organize New Information About All We Continue To Hold Dear
Tell the story I have outlined in this article. In a postparadigmatic paradigm, arts policy should advocate funding for arts initiatives that valorize *informing* arts practices as a present catalyst for social renewal and community enterprise, and not merely as a reservoir for perpetuating socio-cultural traditions.

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[1] A recent story about Potters for Peace may be found at
http://www.thebatt.com/home/index.cfm?event=displayArticlePrinterFriendly&uStory_id=1ff695c9-b065-42e2-81d2-22e0522787a4

In Conclusion

If we apply Löfgren's insights to the quest for effective arts education policy, there will have to be a period where arts educators each live out and activate the change in their own arts practices and pedagogy as an individual "instantiation of semiotic change" (Löfgren, 1997, p. 260) based on new language about the arts. We must accomplish this before we can reasonably expect "societal instantiation of semiotic change" (Löfgren, 1997, p. 260) to fully manifest itself as new national purpose and public policy toward the arts. I have argued for the timeliness of a reconceived paradigm for understanding and advocating the relevancy of arts practices in the wake of the Information Age. This article rethinks the semiotics defining art in an era of shifting paradigms and the questioned relevance of the arts in education. My hope is that this policy exploration will serve to provide new language for arts and arts education practitioners first, and ultimately for those policy-makers we seek to influence.

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