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A New Vision of Art Education

Sharon Naomi Wherland
Western Washington University

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by

Sharon Naomi Wherland

Under the advisement of Dr. Shelby Sheppard

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HONORS THESIS

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"Art when really understood is the province of every human being. It is simply a question of doing things, anything, well. It is not an outside, extra thing. When the artist is alive in any person, whatever his kind of work may be, he becomes an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressive creature."

-Robert Henri [i]

In this project I address two societal assumptions concerning the discipline of art and their implications for art education. These assumptions are that i) art is primarily a "creative" endeavor with little educational value; and, ii) that the ability to make art requires some sort of rare, innate talent. In my view these are the primary reasons that art is increasingly marginalized in public school programs and our society at large.

I argue that these assumptions about art are faulty for several reasons. First, the discipline of visual arts is an essential component of 'education' in terms of its intellectual contributions. Second, it is a discipline accessible to all people not just a "talented" minority. Finally, I propose that art production should be the focal point of an art education. Through a production-based program the various disciplines of art, art history, art criticism and aesthetics and art production, can be taught in a way that advances all of the intellectual benefits of art.

The impetus for making these claims came out of my study of art and music. I grew up learning to play the violin in a program that used a method devised by Shinichi Suzuki in Japan in the 1930's. Inspired by the realization that nearly every young Japanese child was fluent in Japanese, Suzuki thought that every child could become fluent in the language of music, if it was taught well. Suzuki's approach to teaching music, modeled on aspects of the way humans learn their native language, demonstrates that music is learnable and not reserved for a "talented" minority. The quality of being learnable strongly suggests that music is an intellectual discipline, not merely a "creative" one.

Through my study of the visual arts and my experiences in music education I have come to believe that the discipline of art is also intellectual and learnable. This is in contrast with the predominant view of the visual arts in our culture. The visual arts are generally believed to be primarily creative endeavors that are reserved for the select, innately-talented few. The wide-spread notion that ability in art requires innate talent is best illustrated in the contrast between the views that most people have of their own artistic abilities and musical abilities. For example, people will generally agree that if they studied a musical instrument for a couple years they could gain enough ability to enjoy it, or if they studied any of a variety of other subjects they could learn to enjoy them or make money in applying them to some sort of practice. However, many of the same people will say immediately when asked about their artistic abilities "I can't even draw a stick figure" or "I don't have any talent at art. I would never be able to draw or paint."

The idea that art requires talent implies that it is not teachable. The idea that art is only creative, not intellectual, also implies that it is not teachable and, more

importantly, it implies that it is of less importance than "intellectual" subjects. The ideas that art is not important and not teachable combine to form a marginalized view of art that results in extreme limitations on the time and resources that art teachers are given in public schools with which to teach art. With the limited time and attention given to the visual arts in public schools art educators are incapable of giving students a depth of understanding of art. In support of the idea of a necessary innate talent, and as the result of limited resources, many art programs seek to identify and nurture the "talented" students, and entertain the rest of the students. The lack of success of art programs in achieving a fluency in the language of visual arts further supports the idea that art is not important and not learnable.

To address these faulty assumptions about art, and their implications for art education, this project seeks to answer three questions: first, is art intellectual and therefore learnable; second, can art be learned the way we learn language; and third, is the language of art worth learning? This project addresses the first and third question, supporting the claim that yes, art *is* intellectual, that it *is* learnable and thus worth learning. The question of the process or way by which we learn the discipline of art will wait until future academic work.

In the first chapter I build a foundation of ideas about education to provide a basis for the claim that the discipline of art is worth learning, that it should be an important part of children's education. This requires a deconstruction of the three prevalent uses of the term 'education': socialization, schooling and enlightenment. After an examination of these three uses of the term 'education,' I focus on the ideas of enlightenment to provide the foundation for a "new vision of art education." The second

chapter examines some aspects of 'good thinking' pertinent to the "educated person" and points out how they can be fostered through an education in the visual arts. More specifically, I look at ways of thinking from cognitive psychology and philosophy of education literature that advance the two goals I identify for enlightenment: freedom of mind and self-understanding. I use examples from my own experiences with the visual arts to show how the discipline of visual arts is ideal for advancing the specific aspects of good thinking presented in this chapter.

The third chapter first investigates a contemporary approach to art education called 'Discipline-Based Art Education' in terms of its benefits and deficits for both the development of artistic sensibilities and the educational merits of art education. I then explain how some aspects of the Suzuki Method of Music Education can be used to support the view of art education proponed in this project, remedying the deficits of DBAE. I show how combinations of the strengths of these two programs provide support for a production-centered, enlightenment-motivated view of art education that refutes the faulty assumptions prevalent about the visual arts.

M new vision of art education has some significant implications for the way we think about art—in schools and as a society. Rather than relying on unexamined assumptions about art and its educational merits, I argue that we should consider a number of important social questions in examining the discipline of art: What would our world be like, what would our society be like, if everyone was an artist? That is to say, if everyone acted creatively, inventively, compassionately and with the full capacity of their minds towards achieving new understandings and creating new beauty in their world?

How does one become such an artist, such a maker of things of beauty, and acts of grace? What ways of living, thinking and learning get us there?

I propose that we get there by developing our ability to think and feel and that such abilities are best developed through an education that promotes thinking freely and understanding ourselves and our world deeply. Freedom of mind and a depth of understanding can be nurtured best through an education in the visual arts; though not an art education of the kind with which we are familiar. Rather, these ways of thinking and acting can best be cultivated through a visual arts education that reflects the true nature of the discipline of visual arts and its educational potential.

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[i] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958) p.30, 31.

Chapter 1

The Purpose of Education

"When the artist is alive in any person…he disturbs, upsets, enlightens, and he opens ways for a better understanding. Where those who are not artists are trying to close the book, he opens it, shows there are still more pages possible."

- Robert Henri [1]

Beginning this project requires establishing a substantial philosophical foundation on which to build a new theory for art education. This requires deconstructing our societal uses of the term 'education' into a discussion of the three ways the term is used: socialization, schooling and enlightenment. This is important because concepts of what counts as "education" vary across these three uses. Likewise, the role of the visual arts in education also varies depending on the use of the term 'education'. The three uses of the term education will be examined in relation to the desirable outcomes for the "educated person" and the learning activities directed towards those outcomes for each of the uses of the term 'education.'

The Term Education

There are three main uses of the term 'education', as outlined by Cornel M. Hamm in his book Philosophical Issues in Education.[2] The first is the sociological

approach (used mostly by sociologists) which uses the term education to refer to socialization. The second use of the term 'education' refers to the acts of schooling. This is the most common use of the term. However, when people say "I never got a good education in school" or "I never went to school but got a great education" they are referring to the third sense of education: "general enlightenment" in which one gains a higher level of knowledge and understanding often referred to as wisdom. [3]

Socialization

Of the three ways in which the term 'education' is used, arguably the most important is socialization. As will be discussed later, socialization seems to be at the heart of all other concepts of education. It is characterized as a "natural process" by which people learn to adopt the external behavior patterns and the norms and values of their particular community. In this way people can grow into functional members of their society; fulfilling the desired outcomes of adding to the productive body of adults in the society. As expressed in some of the writings of the educational philosopher John Dewey, a major factor in becoming a socialized adult in our society is the "creation of power of self control,"[4] which he explains as the ability to reflect on past experiences and imagine consequences prior to acting. It should be noted that Dewey's diverse body of work on education and psychology lend support to ideas in all three uses of the term education, though here he will be only cited in support of ideas of education that are part of socialization. In this way the desired outcomes for socialization can be seen as the development of self control and the adoption of the external behavior patterns and norms of the society.

The experiences and activities that relate to socialization are based in a mental process Dewey calls the *reflex arc*, mimicry of the people and situations in one's social environment in games, and through dialogue. Dewey observed that humans learn through a natural cycle of mental activity he called the *reflex arc:* a cycle of experience-reflection-action; the mind absorbs an experience, reflects upon it, imagines future actions as they may occur if new concepts, gained from reflection on experience, are applied, then acts on the new ideas.[5] Through this process people naturally build an understanding of themselves and the world around them.

The *reflex arc* can be seen further in children's play. Children watch and experience situations involving social rules and social roles. Through games they act out their reflections on those experiences, imagining themselves in adult roles or working within the framework of rules. In so doing they are able to form new understandings of social norms and values and incorporate them into their understanding and their actions. Socialization also occurs through dialogue and observation between children and their family members, friends and teachers.

Schooling

The term education is most often used to refer to the purpose and activities of schools. Schooling involves socializing, but while the term socialization applies mostly to the description and examination of how and why humans absorb societal norms and values, schooling refers to constructed, purposeful activities designed to meet particular goals. The goals of our school system in the United States are well described in Joel Spring's book American Education.[6] According to Spring "Public schools exist to serve

public goals."[7] The public goals of schooling are political, social and economic in nature. They include reducing political unrest by teaching common political values and patriotism, reducing social tensions with the promise of equality (in the classroom and workplace), reducing crime by teaching morality; eradicating poverty by stimulating economic growth, and addressing issues of juvenile crime, nutrition, and interracial harmony. Also, a main goal of schooling is to fulfill the public goal of creating a workforce by giving students specific knowledge and a body of skills in preparation for jobs, careers and more specific future job training. Valuing external reward systems is taught through the methods used in mainstream public schools. This particular type of social training is used to teach students to participate in the job market, where people are rewarded for working "correctly" in the system with jobs, salaries, and promotions.

This is preceded by a school system that instills in children the desire to work or study for external reasons: valuing their own achievements based on external measurements of progress (e.g. testing and grading) and working towards future rewards (e.g. diplomas and jobs). This yields a much different lifelong approach to learning than that ideally produced by a sociologically minded or enlightenment driven approaches to teaching.

Socialization in Schooling

Understandings of how children naturally learn are often harnessed to inform teaching methods, as shown by the approaches of the Suzuki Method, Montessori and Waldorf schools.

Efforts to socialize are also found in schools where learning occurs naturally through the interactions that the school environment provides, and through instruction in specific moral and social concepts (abstinence education and drug education for example). In public schools the general approach is one of transmitting a body of knowledge to students and training them to be economically productive. This is often done in a lecture setting where students silently (or with involvement through answering questions) absorb a mass of compartmentalized facts over 12 or 13 years, using obedience to maintain order in the classroom and extrinsic rewards for motivation.

The sociological approach to teaching expressed by John Dewey in his descriptions of progressive education[8] can be found in the teaching approach of the Montessori[9] and Waldorf[10] schools. Dewey wrote that education methods should match a child's development and that children's intellectual development occurs primarily in relation to their social life. Thus a way of teaching that mimics the learning that occurs through social experience will have the greatest success. For this reason Dewey writes that all subjects should be introduced as an extension of social experience.[11]

In this way the desires outcomes for students of the Montessori and Waldorf schools appear to more closely follow Dewey's idea that the body of knowledge children acquire through schools is not intended to act only as job preparation, but should also be learned as it applies to and enriches children's understanding of their experiences. Another important goal of these "progressive" schools is to instill habits of life-long learning and problem solving. This goal is also part of the view of enlightenment.

The method of schooling generally used in the U.S. today, as described by Joel Spring, is one intended to give students experiences in a form that they may later see in a

factory or office in which they work,. This is done as part of an effort to socialize children toward being productive workers. Thus their experience is one of learning obedience, standing in lines, working in silence, obediently waiting one's turn, sitting in a grid and doing the work assigned to attain external rewards and avoid punishment.

Progressive school systems, such as the Waldorf and Montessori schools, have classrooms that are noisier. The students learn through manipulating materials, discussing, and playing. Community based learning is motivated by curiosity and the intrinsic reward of enjoyment and satisfaction, rather than for external rewards and avoidance of punishment. However, there is less of a dichotomy than this presentation implies. Many teachers in mainstream public schools use a more hands-on and community based approach to teaching, however the growing pressure from the state and federal government to get students to pass standardized tests has restricted the freedom to be creative.

Enlightenment:

The third way in which the term 'education' is used is to refer to enlightenment: an understanding of what it is to be "human" gained through achieving a depth and breadth of understanding and a quest for wisdom. The desired outcomes of enlightenment are to cultivate life-long habits of questioning and learning about the world, deepening the student's understanding of himself or herself as a human being and of his or her place in the world. This approach uses reason and imagination in conjunction with a depth and breadth of knowledge gained in a formal, curiosity-based study of a variety of intellectual languages in the sciences, humanities and the arts. The

goal of such learning is the capacity to think in complex ways about the world, and the desire for greater understanding. This basic idea is approached from a variety of angles by educational philosophers throughout the history of western civilization, from Aristotle and Plato, to Jean-Jacques Rousseau among others, and contemporary writers such as John Wilson and Maxine Greene.

Plato's *The Republic* shows that a goal of educating is to give young people the tools to deconstruct their assumptions about the world around them, critically examine their own beliefs and build understandings about themselves and the surrounding world. This ability comes with the use of reason which is developed through dialogue. In Book VII of *The Republic,* Plato uses the *Allegory of the Cave* to explain his theory. The story illustrates the idea that people can be guided to take the arduous journey from acceptance of comfortable, unquestioned assumptions to true knowledge. The role of the teacher in terms of this path will be discussed later in respect to student learning.

Plato's philosophical views were further developed by a student in his school, Aristotle. In his *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle describes the purpose of education as the cultivation of one's capacity to contemplate the world and one's role in it in order to achieve the ultimate goal of life, which is a state he calls *eudemonia.*[12] The word *eudemonia* has been translated both as 'happiness' and as 'satisfaction' indicating that thinking, reasoning, and acting to learn and analyze problems are the most worthwhile human activities, leading to feelings of completion and satisfaction—the ultimate goal in life.

In his paper *Seriousness and the Foundations of Education*, John Wilson describes the (internal) goal of enlightenment education as including the development of a quality he calls 'seriousness.' He defines this term as a state of diligent self-analysis or self-

monitoring: constantly questioning one's thoughts, beliefs and feelings to gain an understanding of one's psychology. Self-understanding, he argues, gives us the tools to act and think about the world clearly; without self-understanding we are thinking and acting with faulty tools. Thus Wilson makes the argument for constant acquisition of self-understanding in conjunction with growing knowledge of outside disciplines in order to understand oneself and one's world, and to have fluency in the "languages"[13] needed to think creatively about these subjects.[14]

Maxine Greene adds that an aim of enlightenment education is also to attain autonomy (i.e. personal freedom). This idea in many ways draws the previous aspects of education together with the idea that education is intended to be liberating. Having the freedom to inquire is not simple. It requires building habits of rational thought, self-examination (Wilson's seriousness) pursuit of happiness through problem solving (Aristotle's eudemonia) and fluency in a variety of languages with which to think about and discuss the world with both a depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding. Henri's vision of people as artists fits the ideas of enlightenment, as represented in the opening quotation, suggesting that a foundation for Henri's ideas compliment the ideas of enlightenment philosophers towards the goal of building a foundation for a new view of art education.

Enlightenment has historically been strongly associated with methods that emphasize a self-motivated and social experience for students. Learning about oneself, the world and one's role in it comes through questioning, thinking and dialogue. Education is fueled by personal curiosity and inquiry rather than by external rewards. In this way the experience is like that of socialization. The expectation that the experience

of learning is self motivated is still there. The difference is in the desired outcomes. In enlightenment education the natural process of learning is applied with the proper guidance to achieve a breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding strong enough to lay a foundation for creative thought.

Self-motivation in terms of the enlightenment view needs to be briefly addressed. Self motivation refers to the internally-generated drive in an activity. Specific feelings that act as motivators when associated with an activity are enjoyment and satisfaction. When an activity is enjoyable or satisfying we tend to want to keep doing it. This is a concept central to the sociological view of education and fits perfectly with enlightenment goals for the child's experience of the learning process and for the method of teaching. The inter-connected states of enjoyment and satisfaction occur throughout what Maxine Greene describes as "fruitful curiosity." With an environment full of challenges and obstacles and the freedom and knowledge necessary to interact with them and solve problems, students become interested and motivated, enjoying the feeling of being "on to something" as Greene calls it.[15]

Ancient Greek concepts of enlightenment are currently manifested in the term "liberal arts education." The word *liberal* is derived from *liberate.* A liberating education is one intended to free the mind. The approach is one of open, trusting, intellectual discussion among a small group of students and mentors. Discussion facilitates thinking creatively and expressing oneself coherently about ideas in fields of knowledge studied through curiosity based, directed study. Though a lot of emphasis has been placed on the importance of sharing and discussing in teaching methods associated with enlightenment education, students must have something to discuss—a depth and

breadth of knowledge in a variety of subjects—in order to have the freedom of mind to think creatively about oneself, the world and one's place in it.

This requires gaining a depth of knowledge in a variety of areas in a manner specifically suitable to that field and in conjunction with discussions spanning different subjects. Some subjects, such as philosophy, may be best learned through dialogue, as was promoted by Socrates down through Plato and Aristotle. Other languages of inquiry however are best learned in other ways. For example, sciences may be best learned with a combination of lecture and hands-on application of the ideas in the form of experiments and math may be best taught with a combination of lecture, personal practice and guided exploration. A musical instrument, on the other hand, may be best learned through the careful attention paid to students in private lessons as well private practice and participation in ensembles, in and out of school.

Gaining workable knowledge in a variety of disciplines is important in a liberal education because different fields of inquiry are each suited for understanding a different part of the world. The hard sciences teach us about our physical environment, the social sciences and humanities teach us the most about our social environment and the role of the individual in a community, and the arts are best suited for exploring the universal and personal spirit. Thus it is important to have a basic breadth of knowledge (understanding of the ideas in each area) and to acquire it in a way that frees the mind to make connections among different fields.

In summary, a deconstruction of the term education yields a complex wealth of ideas that tells us a lot about the meanings of education and the role of education in our

society. In constructing an understanding of education it is important to see how the three uses of the term overlap and inform each other. The use of education to refer to socialization is perhaps the most important and foundational. Absorbing the norms, values, language and rules of our culture allow us to have the necessary abilities to communicate and participate in the society. While socialization characterizes a natural process of learning about and adapting to one's social environment schooling can be characterized as a "willful" socialization. The systematic programs of study presented in schools are intended to impart a specific, and often standardized, set of ideas, habits and values. This is done in an attempt to form the future society.

The objectives of both socialization and schooling are extrinsic: outside of the individual. We learn the language and norms of our society for the individual need to communicate, but also for the larger benefit of the community and to attain the external, socially derived rewards that come with participation in the society. The methods and curricula employed in systems of schooling specifically teach children to work for external rewards in the form of grades, degrees, approval of others etc. in order fulfill the societal needs for a workforce.

The learning experiences associated with schooling and socialization reflect the extrinsic nature of the desired outcomes of each. Socialization occurs through mimicry of the languages, manners, behaviors and rules of the surrounding society. Mimicry occurs in game playing as children learn from their experiences by playing out imagined future social roles. The extrinsic desired outcomes of schooling are most often imparted through lecture-based learning of standardized progressive curriculums.

In contrast, the desired outcomes of enlightenment are intrinsic in nature. Education is intended to develop freedom of mind and self understanding: aspects of personally motivated individual development. The activities associated with enlightenment are challenging, trusting discussions among peers and mentors, and hands-on, engaging, self-motivated activity.

Education and Art

With the varied objectives and learning experiences found in the three uses of the term 'education' come varied views of the discipline of visual art and its importance. When education is viewed as socialization art education is only as prevalent or necessary to education as it is important in a child's particular environment. In a family of artists a child would naturally become socialized to value and understand art. However, with the marginalization of art in our society, art is a small part of most children's lives, if it is present at all. Thus, if education is viewed solely as socialization then it follows that art education is only marginally important for most people's education.

In schooling art is not seen as a serious contributor to education and is not thought to be teachable because it is thought to require innate talent and be merely a "creative" and not an "intellectual" and mentally advancing discipline. Thus it is thought to do little to advance the desired outcomes of education. This view flourishes because it reinforces itself. Art is seen as less important than other subjects due to its "un-intellectual" nature. Due to the limited resources available to public schools this results in the marginalization of art instruction. Art programs are often reduced to a token amount of monthly or weekly time for students, if they exist at all. The consequent

failure of art teachers to cultivate a high level of ability in their students further supports the notion that art is not teachable: that it uses illusive ways of thinking called 'creativity' that cannot be taught. Thus art programs often function as support for the children deemed talented, and as entertainment for the rest of the students.

In enlightenment, by contrast, art is important particularly when the discipline of art is viewed properly: as being an intellectual discipline. As will be discussed in the next chapter art education is particularly suited to advance the desired outcomes of enlightenment: the development of the aspects of thinking that yield freedom of mind and self-understanding.

The following two chapters will develop these claims in greater depth. However in brief explanation, our culture is primarily visually oriented—sight is our most important sense. We learn the most about our world through the sense of sight, and the more we cultivate it the more we can know about our world. We are bombarded by so much visual information that our brain instantly filters most of what we see into categories and concepts. It is difficult to truly see past any object's labeled meaning to its true shapes and colors and character. Building the ability to render the physical world in art is the best way to cultivate the ability to truly "see," which is vital to learning about one's social and physical environment.

For example, I spent a summer making detailed drawings of trees. During that time my awareness of them changed immensely. Instead of appearing as static masses they now appear to me as individuals with unique personalities. I worked to adopt this sense of the individuality and expressiveness of trees, and an ability to render them, into my artistic vocabulary.

The painting shown below[16] is an example of my effort to combine different areas of my experience (in this case experiences that relate to my relationship with my grandfather) towards the goal of expressing personal ideas through the language of art.

Also, if taught in a "natural" way (a sociologically-sound way) art education can provide a wealth of other benefits, particularly, the ability to analyze and express oneself. The visual arts are one of the arts of Western culture currently entrenched in notions of creativity. This is to say that unlike classic dance, theatre and music, the visual arts have become in large part *creative* rather than *re-creative*. While some cultures have a tradition of art that is based on recreating particular imagery or applying particular techniques or working within a particular theme, Western culture currently values art more when it appears in the form of a personally expressive and unique visual language.

Teaching technical fluency and visual sensitivity and empowering personal creativity are thus all necessary aspects to a good education in Western art. Art education can cultivate the kind of seriousness that Wilson advocates and the sensitivity of heart advocated and achieved by Shinichi Suzuki in his music education method. It can allow children to grow into Robert Henri's vision of an artist, and it can foster a life-long habit of seeing the world with sensitivity and expressing oneself visually: activities that can bring joy, satisfaction, and learning for a life time.

Thinking of education solely as socialization or schooling explains why art education is marginalized in schools and used, at best, as a form of entertainment. However, education is and must be rooted in socialization, even when maintaining enlightenment as the higher desired outcome.

Socialization is a necessary part of education, by any view, for the ability to communicate effectively and understand one's society is necessary for self-actualization. Likewise, schooling is the primary means for educating our young in our contemporary society. Children come to value and live by the norms of their surrounding culture and by what they are taught in schools. Until art is shown to be teachable and important for intellectual development it will not be taught well in schools. Continued marginalization in schools furthers the deterioration of the role of art in the larger culture; thus further lessening the role of art in natural socialization as well. It is through valuing enlightenment as the ultimate goal of education that art education can grow to be valued. The true nature of the discipline of visual arts and its importance for intellectual development are exemplified in the desired outcomes and activities of an enlightenment-motivated education.

It cannot be denied that socialization is at the core of education and that schooling is the most prevalent mechanism for our society's conscious efforts at educating its citizens. If enlightenment is valued, however, then views of art and art education can begin to change. As art becomes a more highly valued it follows that it will be taught with greater quality and attention, making art an important part of children's lives and relevant to their socialization as well.

In the following chapter I will explore the role of art education in enlightenment by examining the aspects of thinking that promote the desired end goals of enlightenment: freedom of mind and self understanding. Using my own experiences for examples I will show how learning and thinking in the discipline of art promotes the aspects of thinking that allows one to achieve the desired outcomes of enlightenment.

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[1] Robert Henri. *The Art Sprit* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc. 1958) p. 15.
[2] C.M Hamm. *Philosophical Issues In Education: An Introduction* (New York: Falmer Press, 1989).
[3] Hamm, p. 30, 31.
[4] John Dewey. *Experience in Education* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1971) p. 64.
[5] John Dewey. "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," *Psychological Review* 3 (1896) pp. 357-370.
[6] Joel Spring. *American Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004).
[7] Spring, p.7.
[8] Dewey, *Experience in Education*, pp.17-23
[9] The American Montessori Society, http://www.amshq.org/index.html (accessed January 1, 2006).
[10] Association of Waldorf Schools of North America, http://www.awsna.org/ (accessed January 1, 2006).
[11] Dewey *Experience in Education*, pp.40-45
[12] Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics.* (ca. 330 BCE) as found in Reed Johnson (ed.) *Philosophical Documents in Education* (United States: Addison-Wesley Longman, Inc, 2000).
[13] The term "language(s)," when in quotes refers to the methods of inquiry and areas of knowledge explored by each unique discipline. Otherwise the word language(s) refers to the more literal definition of spoken and written languages.
[14] John Wilson, "Seriousness and the Foundations of Education," *Education Theory* (Vol. 48 No. 2. 1998) pp. 144-150.
[15] Maxine Greene, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988) p.122.
[16] Sharon Wherland, *Support* (2005, oil on canvas, 24 x 32 inches).

Chapter 2

Art and Cognition

"I am not interested in art as a means of making a living, but I am interested in art as a means of living a life."

--Robert Henri[1]

An education in the visual arts is valuable when it is seen as necessary to teach the intellectual aspects of the "language" of visual arts: critical/creative thinking, clarity of sight and sensitivity of heart. By teaching clarity of sight for both inner and outer worlds: the world within our mind—our memories, knowledge, thoughts and feelings—and the physical and social worlds around us, an art education can free the mind to learn effectively, experience life deeply and act with sensitivity and beauty. A society wherein a child has the opportunity to learn these skills and experience such joys can not help but be a more beautiful place.

Clarity of inner and outer sight translates as an ability to think effectively to achieve freedom of mind. Inherent in the enlightenment view of education is the idea that the purpose of education is to foster freedom of mind. In this chapter I will argue that the visual arts are uniquely interdisciplinary in nature, and that it is due to this quality

(among others) that a visual arts education can provide a key piece of a liberal arts education, facilitating mental freedom. Freedom of mind is the freedom to think effectively: to achieve a depth and breadth of knowledge and the ability to understand how to combine concepts from different disciplines to inform new experiences. This chapter will describe and support the particular aspect of thinking I wish to foster through teaching art--one that facilitates freedom of mind.

The aspect of good thinking I wish to foster is one that can give the greatest freedom to think by providing a multidimensional and more meaningful way of experiencing and learning. It also helps to foster greater sensory and intellectual acuteness, allowing experiences to be more meaningful. The particular aspect of thinking I will be supporting in this paper combines concepts discussed by the educational philosophers Sharon Bailin[2] and Blythe Clinchy[3] regarding critical thinking, creative thinking and connected knowing. Connected knowing is the first part of this way of thinking because it allows experiences to be as meaningful as possible. Combining the concepts of creative and critical thinking is helpful because it yields a more accurate model for the way we actually think. To further increase the effectiveness of critical/creative thinking I argue that incorporating the concept of cognitive flexibility, as described in Arthur Efland's *Cognition and Art Education,*[4] into critical/creative thinking generates a way of thinking that is effective at facilitating freedom of mind.

By encouraging this new view of thinking--one that combines the strengths of different aspects of thinking and draws on the interrelated nature of experience--an art education can foster freedom of mind and act as a unifying thread through a liberal arts education. With this framework, an art education can encourage a life-long love of

learning. This is by virtue of the joy and satisfaction that come from accomplishing something challenging and creating something meaningful, which refers back to Aristotle's enlightenment-based arguments for education. In the context of art education this would come partly as a result of a habit of looking, discussing, and creating art.[5]

Though the inspiration for this project came out of my experience with music education and my belief in the communicative power of music, art may have more success in providing opportunities for people to express a range of ideas and thus be even more valuable in an enlightenment motivated education. That is to say that as a language, the visual arts may have the capacity to be more communicative than music. This is due to the ability of the visual arts to communicate more specific ideas than music often can. Music's lack of structure as a language for communicating specific, daily concepts gives it power to express complex and amorphous emotional experiences that act as a conversation between the spirit of a composer and performer, performer and listener. That is to say, a melody cannot convey "I am going to the store today," but it can express the way heartache feels in clearer and more succinctly than the English language often can. The more technical fluency I gained, and the more I understood about what music expressed, the more I was able to convey in my playing. However, as is still the case with classical music, for my society classical music remains an isolated, insular art. The abstract nature of instrumental music makes it difficult to reference very specific concepts, people, places, events and ideas (with some exceptions such as quoting a well-known melody that has historical or political connotations, or following the beat pattern of a popular baroque dance).

Here the visual arts are more communicative. Because of the pictorial nature of most art movements, art can directly reference cultures and convey emotions beyond what verbal and written language often can. Visual arts are able to reference specific objects, people, places, ideas and events as well as express complex emotional experiences informed by the viewers' experiences. This means that art education can go farther than classical music education in inter-relating the various areas of knowledge and experience in people's lives.

As stated previously, enlightenment should aim to promote freedom of mind. The first step in facilitating freedom of mind is to develop a depth and breadth of ideas that cross the disciplines. Having a depth of knowledge in one or more disciplines allows for complex thought in that area, while a basic breadth of knowledge across the disciplines establishes awareness of the different areas of human understanding and allows for an understanding of the inter-connected nature of the personal, social and physical worlds.

However, the understanding that our experiences are ultimately all part of a single unified experience—that our lives are full of interrelated ideas, knowledge and experiences—is not explicit in the study of various subjects because schooling tends to stress the isolation of subjects, rather than their inter-connectedness. On the other hand, the greater the facility to connect apparently disparate ideas in new and relevant ways, the greater the amount of autonomy children will be able to achieve.

My proposed "new vision of art education" is a means of addressing what I see as the social problem of isolating and segregating different ways of thinking, and different bodies of experience and knowledge. To clarify, our schooling and socializing appear to

me to hinge on ideas of separateness: subjects are separated in schools, broken into ever smaller and more isolated parts. Ways of thinking are separated into critical thinking and creative thinking. The model presented in schools of isolated ways of thinking and isolated subjects does not accurately reflect how we think and how our experiences and knowledge are structured. By teaching in this way, schools sabotage their own efforts to convey knowledge in a meaningful and interesting way.

One of the most persuasive separations promoted in schooling is the separation of critical and creative thinking. My own experience in studying music and art has shown this to be a false assumption about thinking. Learning to play the violin and paint are equally intellectually and artistically challenging. Conveying a specific emotion through a painting or a piece of music requires the use of logic and critical analysis throughout the process of creating a work of art or learning a piece of music. Similarly learning the techniques of manipulating paint and playing the violin require that I act creatively and experiment with a variety of different solutions to any given problem. This view is supported by Sharon Bailin in her essay, "Critical and Creative Thinking," where she argues against the false dichotomy of critical and creative thinking which prevails in our contemporary society.

In her description of the "standard view" Bailin states that critical thinking is conceived as analytic, rule-based, selective and confined to specific frameworks.[6] She quotes Arthur Koestler's description of critical thinking as "disciplined thought" saying that "disciplined thought is a skill governed by a set of rules of the game."[7] The standard thought on the difference between creative and critical thinking is best described with her quote from Edward de Bono's *The Mechanism of Mind*: "Logical thinking may find out

the best way of putting together A, B, and C but it will not discover that A, B, and C are inappropriate units anyway."[8]

Bailin goes on to describe the "standard view" of creative thinking as being a spontaneous mode of thought that is inherently non-evaluative, relying heavily on intuition and unconscious processes rather than logic. Creativity is assumed to involve working outside of the frameworks that define logical thinking.[9] In arguing against this dichotomy Bailin shows how creative thinking is inherently critical as well. She points out that in finding creative solutions to a problem one must first identify a problem. [10] This requires having depth of knowledge in a particular field to perceive a problem within it. The perception of a problem also requires critical assessment of a situation and judgment in determining the possible solutions.[11] The idea that creative thinking denies logical structures or goes beyond them is also false in virtue of the fact that generating solutions to problems requires working within the framework and is not the product of random invention. Bailin supports this with the description of mathematics, as an example of a subject where the creative act of problem solving clearly remains within the logical structures of the discipline.[12]

Bailin continues with a discussion of the implications for education in terms of her view that creative and critical thinking are interrelated. In respect to creative thinking she argues that in-depth knowledge of the

concepts and structures of a subject are necessary prerequisites to innovative work in an area, for it is not possible to understand what needs to be solved or where understanding is lacking without a depth of knowledge in the field. It is also necessary to communicate to students that the knowledge in any given field is not closed in a strict framework, but that the act of learning and thinking are inherently personal, creative and dynamic: combining different frameworks and disciplines.[13] She quotes Peter McKeller from his book *Imagination and Thinking* as giving a good characterization of the attitude that facilitates creativity: "serious receptivity towards previous thought products and unwillingness to accept them as final." That is to say that it is important to instill in students a respect for and knowledge of the ideas and structures of a discipline. Not accepting the ideas of a field as "final" is to understand the creative and dynamic nature of critical thought.[14]

Bailin successfully argues for a connected view of critical and creative thinking, but this does not address the "experience" of thinking. However, Blythe Clinchy, in her essay "On Critical Thinking and Connected Knowing" does present two contrasting experiential ways of thinking. She sets up a dichotomy between critical thinking (which she also calls "Separate Knowing") and "Connected Knowing." She characterizes critical thinking as "the doubting game" saying that it requires the act of separating yourself from an argument, subject, paper, piece of art etc, with the intent of finding problems in its arguments and forming opposing views.[15] That is to say that critical thinking means consciously or unconsciously holding yourself apart from the object or idea in question in order to compare and contrast it to your understanding of the world and in so doing decide on its meaning and value. This implies a preemptory lack of acceptance which

implies a diminished ability to be effected by and learn from a work of art, an argument, a piece of music, etc. This is something I have experienced second hand many times, specifically in respect to abstract art. Works of art with skill and intent that are not immediately apparent often yield a reaction of impulsive rejection and annoyance from many. On the other hand, works of art that have recognizable imagery convey something to the viewer immediately. Abstract and non-representational art work is often not as easy to enjoy and understand. Their presence in an art museum often seems to produce annoyance and even anger from the viewer who refuses to believe that the work *is* art. The viewer refuses to take the time to experience the piece in a new way. The meaning of art is often not explainable; it simply must be experienced to be understood, since the message is one that may not be translatable into the English language. According to Clinchy, this "experience" comes in the form of a new way of thinking.

'Connected Knowing' is the term she uses for a contrasting way of thinking.[16] As the title suggests, this way of thinking involves empathizing with the work (and through it with the writer or artist). It involves trying to understand and believe the ideas being presented first and foremost. Discussion and criticism come from this stance, from a desire to understand, not to find fault. While characterizing critical thinking as "the doubting game" Clinchy calls connected knowing "the believing game." It involves trying to understand another's point of view. Clinchy shows how this mode of learning is well alluded to in Bertrand Russell's discussion of how to read philosophy. In his *History of Western Philosophy,* he states that "in studying a philosopher, the right attitude is neither

reverence nor contempt." He says that you should start reading with a kind of "sympathy...until it is possible to know what it feels like to believe in his theories."[17]

This strikes me as exactly the right way to think about works of art. Paraphrased for art, this statement might read as: *you should look at a work of art until you know what it feels like to believe it.* Historically important artists were highly regarded in their time because they made works that were thought to have value. It is important to understand what "truths" they were thought to contain and in what context they meant something. By working to connect with the work, (i.e. learning what it feels like to *believe* the work), we can truly "see" a piece of art in a way that will allow us to learn from it. Connected knowing is perhaps even more important as a way of thinking when it comes to viewing modern art. As previously noted, many people remain unable to see and experience abstract art because they immediately *separate* themselves from the work instead of trying to *connect* with it.

Further thought has led me to believe that connected knowing could be more successful as a way of experiencing than critical thinking in relation to the study of any experience not just the arts, though it is less obvious how necessary and beneficial this mode of thinking can be for subjects outside of the arts. Connected knowing may contribute to deeper and more perceptive thinking when it precedes critical/creative thinking by allowing for more experiential understanding before judgment and analysis.

The way in which connected knowing can successfully precede critical/creative thinking is demonstrated by its use in teaching. As discussed by Clinchy, many of the classroom experiences cited as being particularly successful and memorable were those where the teacher believed in the student: believed in his or her ability and desire to

express and worked to believe in the work he or she was presenting. When a teacher absorbed the work in this way her comments came, not as criticism but as collaboration: a mutual desire to see the work communicate its ideas more clearly or develop the ideas more and communicate them more fully.[18] In this way connected knowing fosters the kind of mentor-student relationship that comes close to the approach to teaching through dialogue established by Socrates as the basis for Enlightenment education.

Entering into a work or idea and believing in it *before* forming reactions allows for a greater depth of experience because it allows the work to have an affect on us, it invites a meaningful experience. Connected Knowing does not take the place of critical/creative thinking. Instead it should come before Separate Knowing (critical/creative thinking) to allow experiences to be as meaningful as possible. The depth of one's ability to enter into a work successfully (i.e. empathize with it) and to think critically/creatively about that work depends on one's capacity to access and interrelate different memories and bodies of knowledge.

It is often taken for granted in schools that teaching a set of concepts automatically translates into the ability to apply the information in various new ways. This is not necessarily the case. Ideas from the field of cognitive psychology are very useful in helping us understand why the ability to interrelate knowledge and understanding often does not develop in certain domains and across domains, and why certain types of art education can cultivate ways of understanding and interrelating knowledge.

In *Art and Cognition,* Arthur Efland defines interrelating knowledge as 'cognitive flexibility' and bases his discussion on the work of several psychologists, including Rand

Spiro, Paul Feltovich, Richard Coulson, Daniel K. Anderson and their colleagues. Their work of interest is based on answering the question "why do large numbers of students have difficulty applying a body of knowledge in their life and job situations?" This question came out of the observation that many medical students, despite amassing a large volume of information in school, were unable to recall and apply it in clinical situations.

The answer that these psychologists found is based on the idea that different domains of knowledge are structured differently, with a main division existing between domains that are "well-structured" and those that are complex or "ill-structured."[19] Well structured domains are those that can be organized into well-defined frameworks of a standard body of information that builds from small to more complex concepts and often involve a lot of memorization. Efland seems to conclude that very few, if any, domains actually fit this description and that it may just be that the framework is imposed on disciplines because it allows for more simple (even though less effective) teaching, testing and studying.[20] The argument posed is that medicine is an example of an ill-structured domain that has been taught as though it were well structured. This is to say that memorizing a body of facts did not equip students with the ability to combine the facts in new, more complex ways to answer problems faced when diagnosing patients.

Efland goes beyond Spiro and his colleagues in stating that art is another example of a complex domain, as shown by the fact that interpretation of a work of art involves drawing on understanding from a variety of fields, including social history, art history, and one's personal experience and aesthetic taste. As everyone has different conceptions

of beauty, and the meanings of works of art and their historical importance is so diverse, devising a "standard" body of knowledge which is organized into a well-structured curriculum seems foolhardy. Efland goes on to say that any domain is complex if it involves personal judgment and an absence of a set of rules that can be applied to all, or even most situations in the field.[21]

The way to teach subjects with ill-structured knowledge, Efland argues, is to discuss individual cases. He uses the metaphor of knowledge in ill-structured subjects as being more similar to a landscape than to a directional path. That is to say that instead of being organized and progressive, ideas exist across a plane and must be learned about through explorations. Because the concepts are interrelated in various and unpredictable ways, the landscape is best explored through the study of individual cases that act as landmarks connecting various concepts in the memory. This allows for easy recall and understanding, and facilitates the ability to connect different ideas in new ways.

Since artworks are individual, creative objects based in history and culture, they can act as landmarks within many different specific knowledge landscapes (domains) and as landmarks in the larger landscapes of experience, emotion and knowledge (e.g. they can provide the tools to interrelate concepts from different domains).

The claim that studying works of art can develop cognitive flexibility is a rather lofty one that requires further elaboration. The study of visual art can be separated into two general areas: looking and making. Teaching art mainly addresses learning from works of art (how to see, analyze, talk about and relate to works of art); and how to create art: combine knowledge and facility in a medium with intuition and the desire to

express an idea. For greater clarity these two divisions of art, looking and making, can be understood as providing *connections* between different domains in specific ways.

Studying works of art can provide an understanding of the "emotional complex" which was dominant during a particular historic event or period of time. While historic records can tell us of wars, and even convey the immensity of the loss that occurred in a single battle with a number or a list of names, visual images are often capable of doing much more to help us gain an emotional understanding of an event.

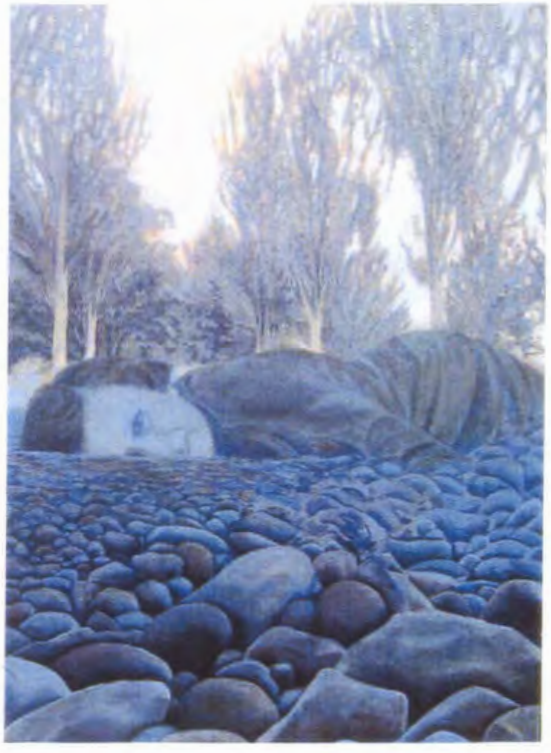
With that statement a short discussion of the difference between art and artifact must be mentioned. Visual documentations and artifacts are sometimes relegated to anthropology and sometimes studied in the context of art; however I think the same purpose exists in the study of any visual, pictorial artifact regardless of the context. In studying creative arts the artist is usually present, opening another set of interconnections between the artist, their experience and culture, and between the artist and the viewer through the artwork.

There is a very "fuzzy" distinction between the objects defined as art and those considered to be artifacts. To me this hints at the fact that they should not be separated in regards to understanding how to glean meaning from the visual is a necessary skill. I would go so far as to say that the ability to see the world with eyes that are sensitive to what is being communicated (by everything from architecture to art to advertisements) is necessary for understanding our society. That said, the study of art is more generally about studying visual culture, and thus the goal in learning to see visual art and artifact is to understand what is being communicated about various aspects of the culture. And, I reiterate, visual images are often able to express more about the emotional and social

context of a given time or place than an oral language can. The old motto "a picture is worth a thousand words," is a common sense expression of our ability to absorb complex and detailed information when it is presented visually.

Studying visual art can give the viewer an understanding of the relationship between the artist and the place, people or events depicted in their art. This is more specifically apparent in mediums such as drawing and painting, where the hand of the artist is visible and the process of reproducing an image means that the work of art is a record of the way in which the artist interpreted the image. Since interpretation is a very personal process colored by our emotions and past experiences, the work of an artist is thus, in large part, a look at the artist herself.

Another connection that studying art can provide is between the events, emotions or people represented in a work of art and the experiences and emotions of the viewer. Works of art are often skillfully created to provoke emotional reactions, inviting the viewers to have an experience with the image that teaches them about themselves in new ways. Along the same lines, works of art can make connections between the artist (by virtue of the autobiographical nature of creative art) and the viewer.



While overlapping in the lessons it teaches (especially in respect to the sensitivity of eyesight, and emotional awareness) creating art can invite new ways

of connecting different domains. Specifically, the act of creating art brings knowledge about one's perceptual abilities and knowledge of the physical world together towards the problem-solving task of translating ideas into a powerful visual representation.[22]

The main goal in the enlightenment view of education is to "know thyself." Self understanding is the area of learning most naturally acquired through making art. This comes in part through conscious efforts at self examination when one works to create self-referential works of art, as well as in the creation of work that is based on the use of "intuition," which is the case for the majority of decisions in many process oriented arts, such as drawing and painting. In this way creating art makes connections between an individual's conscious and subconscious. Reason and creativity must both be used in making process-based art. By the term 'processed-based art' I am referring to a way of working in mediums such as painting and drawing where the artist makes a mark based on an understanding of forms, color and composition and the sensibility they can express, then analyzes it consciously before reacting to the new situation on the paper or canvas with a new mark. This way of working is in contrast to result-oriented mediums and processes (such as stone sculpture and etching), where the art work cannot be seen until a print is run or the stone has been fully chiseled away. These mediums are more conducive to carefully planned works and often facilitate more

conscious self examination, where process-based arts cultivate self-knowledge through a conversation between reason and intuition. [23]

In summary, art education is an ideal vehicle for fostering enlightenment-motivated aspects of thinking because the discipline of visual art naturally exemplifies the ways of thinking described in this chapter. The first ideal of enlightenment, freedom of mind, is advanced through the activities of Connected Knowing and Separate Knowing. The act of looking at art involves connecting then separating from an experience. This habit is the best way of learning from works of art, because artworks usually communicate through emotional as well as intellectual means that seldom involve literal, objective translation. Having a full experience from a work requires opening one's heart and mind, withholding critical analysis and judgment until after one has experienced the work deeply and can separate one self and analyze the work without jeopardizing the quality of the learning experience.

Creating and looking at art naturally exemplify cognitive flexibility and the inherent connection between critical and creative thinking. Creating art exemplifies the inseparable nature of critical and creative thinking particularly well. Creating process-based art, such as an abstract painting, requires shifting back and forth between critical analysis of the work and emotional, self-conscious paint application choices. In contrast a piece of carefully planned art requires creating a new experience for the viewer that invokes a particular message decided upon and formed through critically analyzing one's knowledge and the work of art as it is formed.

Learning how to understand works of art and make art develops cognitive flexibility because works of art naturally express ideas that combine a variety of different

disciplines. Studying works of art is a mental exercise in forming understandings that crosses disciplines, making our memories accessible and meaningful.

The second ideal of enlightenment is to acquire self understanding. This relates to art most clearly with the idea that sensitive external sight leads to sensitive internal sight (self-analysis, or what Wilson calls *seriousness).* Self understanding can come from the knowledge that careful and thoughtful examination of the world because self understanding requires an understanding of one's social and physical environment and one's role in the surrounding community.

My vision of what art education can achieve intellectually differs from what can be found in the established views of art and art education. Therefore entertaining my vision for art education requires a new view of the discipline of art. Some methods have already made some advances in this direction. Two methods of teaching that include ideas that are somewhat compatible with my vision are the curricular frameworks called Discipline-Based Art Education, and the Suzuki Method of Music Education. The following chapter explores how the gaps left in the advancements made by Discipline-Based Art Education are partially filled in by the ideas of the Suzuki method. The ideas combine to show that the discipline of art can provide a "means of living a life"[24] by cultivating ways of thinking that free the mind.

[1] Robert Henri. *The Art Spirit* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958) p.158.
[2] Sharon Bailin. "Critical and Creative Thinking," in William Hare and John P. Portelli, (eds.) *Philosophy of Education: Introductory Readings* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 2001) pp. 167-176.
[3] Blythe Clinchy. "On Critical Thinking and Connected Knowing" in William Hare and John P. Portelli, (eds.) *Philosophy of Education: Introductory Readings* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 2001) pp. 187-196.
[4] Efland A. *Art and Cognition: Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum,* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2002) pp. 82-106.
[5] This desire--to have everyone enjoy the freedom to create art and think with the tools that understanding art can cultivate—is perhaps a reality in other cultures (particularly Balinese culture) and learning from them may help me gain an understanding of how to incorporate such a value into our culture, where the arts are still viewed as the domain of a talented and elite few.
[6] Bailin in Hare, p. 168
[7] Arthur Koestler. *The Act of Creation* (London: Pan Books, 1975), p 178, as quoted Bailin in Hare, p. 169.
[8] Edward De Bono. *The Mechanism of the Mind* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 228 as quoted in Bailin in Hare p. 168
[9] Bailin in Hare, pp.169-170
[10] *The Trees of St. Clouds,* 2006, oil on canvas 24 x 38 inches. This painting involved pursuing the problem of creating a space in a painting that read as both flat, abstract forms and as a realistic wintry image of trees. Identifying this problem from the beginning guided my exploration in finding a solution.
[11] Bailin in Hare, p. 169
[12] Bailin in Hare, p. 170
[13] Bailin in Hare, p. 174
[14] Bailin in Hare, p. 175
[15] Clinchy in Hare, p. 189
[16] Clinchy characterizes it as a more female-oriented way of thinking, with the view of critical thinking being male-oriented. I do not want to address the suggestion that women are apt to think one way and men the other because this suggests inherent differences between men and women and necessities for treating the genders differently. This introduces a whole array of issues and conjectures about male/female differences. I feel that raising such issues is, in general, antithetical to my views of teaching. Teaching should foster a community of equals, not instill concepts of inherent mental differences. Thus I will not be dealing with the gender-based part of her argument but taking the idea of connected knowing alone since I think it has enough strength as a concept to transcend her distinction of it as a predominantly female-oriented way of thinking.
[17] Betrand Russell. *History of Western Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961) p 58, as quoted in Clinchy in Hare, p. 193.
[18] Clinchy in Hare, p. 194-5.
[19] Efland, p. 82
[20] Efland, p. 82
[21] Efland, p. 84
[22] Sharon Wherland. *Margaret Crapo* (2004 oil on canvas, 36 x 48 inches). This is a painting of my grandmother that combines the image of her from an old photograph with my knowledge of her and feelings about our relationship. She had past away two years earlier and making this painting was my way of trying to understand more about her. I also painted it to deal with feelings of sadness and guilt for not having developed a closer relationship with her when she was alive. With the variety of areas of experience and memory that this painting interrelates it is an ideal example of how creating art encourages cognitive flexibility.
[23] Sharon Wherland. *Vermeer meets Diebenkorn* (2005, oil on canvas 38 x 48 inches). This abstract painting exemplifies the concept of "process-based art" in that creating it required a constant dialogue with the painting: examining it for weaknesses, making a move (applying paint) and then taking stock of the new situation, much like a game of chess. In other words, the painting is not made with a specific image in mind but instead arises through a process that begins with looking for the painting's immerging identity and nurturing that identity.
[24] Henri, p. 158

Chapter 3

Art Education and Enlightenment

"Education is not acquiring a stock of ready-made ideas, images, sentiments, beliefs, and so forth; it is learning to look, to listen, to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe, to understand, to choose and to wish."

- Michael Oakeshott [1]

As established in the first chapter, the approach to education that I am promoting in this project is that of enlightenment. In the enlightenment view, education fosters freedom of mind: the ability and desire to think clearly and effectively towards the goal of self knowledge and knowledge of one's social and physical worlds. The second chapter describes some aspects of thinking that promote enlightenment and argues that engaging in the discipline of art promotes aspects of thinking that foster the ideals of enlightenment. I now turn to an examination of the benefits and deficits of two approaches to teaching and what they contribute towards building an enlightenment-based approach to the teaching of art.

The first of the two approaches to teaching examined in this chapter is the pedagogical framework called Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE). This view of art

education goes a long way in remedying the first problem: the view of art as nonintellectual. It does so by teaching art as consisting of four equally important disciplines (art history, art criticism, aesthetics and art production) taught with equal attention from the beginning of children's formal education. However it still does not address the second problem I identify in that DBAE misrepresents the cognitive nature of *creating* art by implying that it is only creative in nature, not intellectual and teachable.

This deficit is filled in by the second approach to teaching that will be examined, which is the Suzuki Method of Music Education. Suzuki establishes a precedent for the high level of achievement that children are capable of reaching in music from at an early age. It does so by viewing music as an intellectual and learnable discipline. It also shows that music education can successfully be used as a tool for nurturing the desired outcomes of enlightenment.

I will make the argument that denying the intellectual nature of art production prevents art education from being as effective as possible in helping people reach the desired outcomes of enlightenment. A production-centered approach allows for an enlightenment-centered approach to art education. The support for centering an art education in art production comes from the production-centered approach to music teaching with which the Suzuki Method is able to nurture intellectual and moral virtues.

Discipline-Based Art Education

A necessary precursor to creating a method and curriculum for teaching art that advances the goals of enlightenment is to establish a view of the arts as being a highly intellectual and important pursuit. A popular theory for art education called Discipline-

Based Art Education (DBAE) addresses this problem by approaching the teaching of art in terms of three disciplines (history, aesthetics and criticism) that require critical thinking, and one, art production, that only uses creative thinking.

Discipline-Based Arts Education was backed and taught from the early 1980's until 1997 by the Getty Center for Arts Education, a part of the Paul Getty Trust. It was first developed for teaching the visual arts and was then expanded to teaching theatre, music and dance. DBAE has been used in a variety of settings including life-long learning centers, museums and classrooms.[2] Its main purpose is for use in the classroom in conjunction with teaching a variety of other subjects.

In regard to the target age group, DBAE has shown that art education should be taught as four equal disciplines, even from children's first years of study. This goes a long ways towards remedying the misconception that children are only capable of complex thought about art starting in their teens. However, by implying that art production is not intellectually challenging DBAE also supports the myth that facility in the skill of making art is based on having innate talent and that it is primarily a creative and nonintellectual endeavor.

As mentioned previously DBAE is innovative in that it breaks the discipline of art education into four separate sub-disciplines: production, aesthetics, criticism and history. Its goals are for content in the curriculum to be balanced between these four sub-disciplines, to include written lesson plans that are age-based, skill-based and sequential in skill development. Its emphasis in teaching these four areas in the arts is on inquiry-based learning, giving students ownership of their education through teacher-student collaboration and dialogue. In this way it goes beyond the traditional view of art

education as being only about the production or performance in a given medium, and sees production as one of four equal disciplines.

The Discipline of Art Criticism

The first discipline [3] identified by Discipline-Based Art Education, as it relates to visual art, is art criticism: learning how to clearly see and understand the meaning of the visual qualities in both art and the environment. This seems simple but really must be developed in order for our eye sight to help us learn and experience as much as possible. Our daily lives are filled with so much visual stimulation that we become somewhat numb to the world. We need to deal with a massive quantity of visual information on a daily basis. This requires the brain to develop strategies for dealing with that information. Instead of seeing the "true" colors, shapes and character of an object we immediately identify it and perceive it cognitively with all of our previous notions of that object, person or the category in which they fit. The ability to truly "see" the work requires "waking" the sense of sight, or not letting it get numb in the first place by starting an education in sensitivity of eyesight from a very early age.

Having a critical eye for art entails developing a sensitivity of sight to the visual qualities of art work and the visual qualities of one's environment. It gives rise to an ability to see cognitively with both analytical and emotional awareness. This is to say that there are two ways of making sense of our experiences: connecting to an experience and separating oneself from an experience (connected and separated knowing). As discussed in the previous chapter both of these ways of experiencing are necessary in order for a person to be affected deeply by their experiences and be able to learn from them; and the

ability to learn from experiences effectively is one of the goals of enlightenment education.

Connected knowing entails seeing the world with an emotional openness to the possibilities of what artwork and the visual world can express. This could be considered a kind of self-consciousness without ego: conscious awareness of an emotional experience while forgetting preconceptions about oneself or the object, place or work of art being viewed. A connected experience entails silencing judgments to allow a visual experience to teach us something new about ourselves, our art or our environment.

An example of a connected experience with a work of art would be to sit in front of a work of art and notice (but not judge) a sense of sadness or claustrophobia expressed by the work. An example involving the surrounding world might be to perceive a person's emotions in observing a person's stance or expression. This kind of sight may be best developed through the act of making works of art and drawing the world around us.

Creating art is a great tool for developing sensitive sight because it involves self-motivated inquiry and incorporates the kinesthetic act of manipulating materials into the learning process. This kind of personal involvement in the learning process has been more successful in teaching than tactics such as listening to lectures or memorizing facts.[4] Being able to control the viewer's emotional experience in viewing your work of art comes through knowledge, practice and experimentation with imagery, composition, style, medium and the many techniques available to an artist to convey emotion, space and ideas. Sensitivity to other people and the physical world around us can be learned through drawing and painting from life, in particular with exercises such as blind contour

drawing and gesture drawing. Contour drawing is the exercise of drawing careful outlines of an object; blind contour drawings involve not looking at the drawing, but keeping your eyes fixed on the edge of the object being drawn. Gesture drawing involves quickly drawing a person with the intention of capturing a feeling of the weight, tension and energy of the person's movement or pose. These exercises, as well as painting exercises such as precisely copying colors or the effect of light on an object, all help to improve one's ability to see the world with greater awareness and sensitivity.

Such exercises help us digest visible information by combining the act of looking with the physical act of drawing. Another way our eyes can become more sensitive to the beauty and detail of our world is through the care-filled gaze that works of art demand. Works of art, because of the value and status associated with them, often demand that the viewer stop and look at them deeply. It is this exercise in looking at a single image carefully that often infects people's eyes with sensitivity to the art (i.e. the beauty and meaning) of the world around them. Thus a program that teaches "seeing" must include teaching children how to look deeply into works of art. Along with everything that works of art express and teach, the simple act of looking at a work of art makes the eyes more sensitive to everything else we see. By inviting us to look deeply into works of art, artists help us see the world around us with greater depth and clarity.

This begins to establish the importance of sensitivity of sight in relation to developing the connected knowing strategy of thinking. As described in the previous chapter, the second step to thinking in a way that promotes enlightenment is critical/creative thinking. Critical/creative thinking acknowledges and builds on the interrelation between creative and critical thinking. New understandings are created by

combining concepts from different areas of experience in new ways (cognitive flexibility) in order to answer the questions that arise through conscious critical analysis. This combined view of critical and creative thinking does the most to facilitate the enlightenment goal of freedom of mind by facilitating clear, effective thinking.

It is important to cultivate both ways of thinking because one cannot make judgments (and should not) while having a connected experience. A great deal of learning comes from being able to analyze and make judgments. Connected knowing and separate knowing cannot exist simultaneously. An example that illustrates this fact can be found in the experience of listening to a music recording. If you listen to recording music with the intention of enjoying yourself you will have an open mind to a set of experiences that you anticipate may happen (e.g. you expect to feel happy and energized, and perhaps expect to recall previous memories surrounding certain songs). If you are listening with the goal of writing a review, your mind will probably remain in a mode of evaluating and analyzing the music and the ensemble. You listen for certain qualities and concepts, passing judgment on the success of the performers in conveying the music effectively.

Discipline-Based Art Education proponents use the traditional view of critical thinking in regard to art criticism. The discipline of criticism is defined as evaluating, describing, theorizing and judging the qualities and properties of a work of art in order to understand and appreciate the work.[5] This is obviously a necessary part to an art education and DBAE does a lot to promote the intellectual nature of the arts by insisting that criticism can and should be incorporated into an art education from the beginning.

Doing this speaks highly of children's intellectual capacities. It also speaks highly of the ability of art education to further children's thinking abilities from a very early age. Thus it is also an ideal area in art education for developing the concept that critical and creative thinking are not different but are really aspects of the same way of thinking: one that is in contrast with but complimentary to connected knowing.

In DBAE-based art curricula the discipline of art criticism is often explored through classroom discussions and writing assignments about historically important works of art. A production-based private art education could work to teach both ways of thinking, connected knowing and critical/creative thinking in the context of weekly group critiques. Students would learn how to believe and experience each other's art work. To experience the work of art of a peer is to sympathize with the artist: to work to understand what the artist is trying to convey. This is the state of connected knowing.

To connect to the work of art of a peer is to work to believe the work and join with the artist in wanting the work to achieve its intentions with the most success. When this relationship with a work of art is reached criticism naturally comes as collaboration with the artists. The separate critical/creative approach to thinking about the work that comes after connecting with it seeks to answer questions in respect to how the work can better succeed at achieving its aims. The comments to the artist will then reflect the personal relationship the student has developed with the work of art in the course of connecting with it and thinking about it critically/creatively. Comments are encouraging and constructive, motivated by a mutual desire between the maker and critic (teacher or peer and student) to have the work of art succeed. Such a situation facilitates friendship, trust and joy. It creates an environment in which students feel comfortable expressing

and working through ideas. It is a situation in which the teacher becomes a mentor, facilitating the kind of conversation and debate that has always been at the heart of enlightenment education.

The Discipline of Art History

The group dynamic also facilitates the incorporation of the second discipline of art identified in DBAE: art history. This discipline examines ways in which culture shapes art and art shapes culture. By identifying it as one of four main components to an art education DBAE raises the importance of the study of art history and its value in developing cognitive abilities by stressing that it can and should be incorporated into art education from the beginning. As discussed in the previous chapter, studying art history is an ideal way to develop the critical/creative thinking strategy of cognitive flexibility. Cognitive flexibility is an ideal tool for furthering the enlightenment goal of having knowledge of one's society. Understanding one's society requires understanding the history that formed it. As discussed in chapter two, works of art and artifacts connect concepts across different disciplines currently and historically. A work of art can teach about a wide variety of interrelated concepts from a period in history. These concepts include historic events, fashions, ideas, emotions, and the perceptions, character and psychology of the artist. Studying history in this way makes our memories and knowledge more interrelated and thus more accessible and meaningful.

Art history can be introduced into an enlightenment-based art program in several ways. It can be explored through museum visits and group discussions about historic works of art, artists and movements. In respect to production, an understanding of

important works of art can come from copying them. To achieve the same effects and affects found in a painting a student needs to copy the original artist's process as well as the image. Through this detailed, careful activity a lot can be learned about the artist and the medium.

An understanding of the history around the work requires study outside of the studio. A program of weekly or monthly research projects into particular artists, movements or works of art is an important aspect of any art education program, both for the ways in which it furthers the goals of enlightenment and for its benefit to student's understanding of the language of visual art.

The Discipline of Aesthetics

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy concerned with beauty and value as they relate to art. It involves asking questions such as: What is art? Who and what determines what a work of art is? And what makes art works different from other objects? Aesthetics is an important component of art education because it helps relate concepts within the discipline of art and between art and ideas in other disciplines. More importantly, aesthetics advances the desired outcomes of enlightenment because it is based on the notion of wonder. Conversations in aesthetics are capable of encouraging "a willingness to voice wonder."[6] Through dialogue, questioning and inquiry about larger questions of meaning and value in art can develop the ability and the feeling of freedom to think deeply about oneself and the world.

Discussions in aesthetics are possible starting from a young age, through to adulthood. Young children are quite capable of thinking about complex questions that

have more than one correct answer. Dialogues about aesthetics can challenge children to have "good reasons" for their ideas. Such conversations allow for later more complex (rational and intellectual) conversation by developing the desire and ability to think in increasingly complex ways.[7]

The Discipline of Art Production

The fourth discipline identified in DBAE is art production. This is defined in DBAE literature as learning the skills and techniques to create original, personal art that conveys their thoughts and feelings.[8] In DBAE there has been little effort at combating the myth that ability in creating art is based on rare, innate talent. It is even supported by some writers who claim that the equal presentation of all four disciplines allows even the "un-talented" students to have a meaningful education in art. The equal presentation of the four disciplines is intended to agree with the idea that creating visual art is only possible for a minority of children, and that the attention to the other three disciplines of the arts gives the rest of the students (i.e. the "untalented" majority) a meaningful education in the visual arts. An enlightenment-based approach to teaching art may work to expand the vision of the value of developing artistic ability and challenge notions of talent and age-appropriate teaching.

The deficit in the approach of DBAE to the discipline of production is remedied by the approach to skill development taken in the Suzuki Method of Music Education. While focusing on teaching children how to play music the Suzuki Method goes beyond the goal of trying to create professional musicians to trying to cultivate beauty in children's hearts and lives. The method has proven successful at nurturing a high level

of musical ability in children from a young age as well as nurturing the development of moral and intellectual virtues through a program centered in teaching music production. Because of this the Suzuki method lends ideal support for a production-centered approach to teaching art.

The Suzuki Method

Shinichi Suzuki, the founder of the Suzuki Method, believed that every child could learn to play the violin; that it is not a talent reserved for a few. He came to this conclusion from the observation that the vast majority of young Japanese children were fluent in Japanese. To attain a very large and working vocabulary at a young age of a particularly difficult language proved that most children had immense natural ability to learn. Suzuki thought that if music was taught in the way children learn their first language they could attain a high level of mastery at a young age.

The goals of enlightenment have a greater potential to be met when children's natural curiosity is nurtured and their learning is self-motivated. We learn language to fulfill the desire to communicate. Since language learning is a natural, self-motivated activity, it is an obvious choice for a process on which to base a teaching method. Suzuki's method thus offers a greater potential for fulfilling the desired outcomes of enlightenment by effectively encouraging the natural desire to learn.

Suzuki's language-learning model picks up where DBAE leaves off, showing the effectiveness in teaching a variety of concepts when fluency in a language is sought and achieved. The effectiveness of Suzuki's method supports the idea that an approach to

art education can focus on production and still succeed at teaching the other sub-disciplines of art, as well as foster enlightenment-motivated aspects of thinking.

The goal in applying principles of language learning to art education is to create a method that makes it possible for every child to reach a high level of ability in creating and understanding art at a young age. That is to say, the purpose is to allow children to become as fluent in the "language of visual arts" as they are in their ability to speak and understand their native language, and thus reap the benefits of being able to communicate and understand the world through another language. Again, this is valuable because the language of art is suited for understanding different aspects of ourselves and our world than other languages. Applying the principles of language learning, as Suzuki did, to the goal of attaining a high level of ability at an early age matches the DBAE goal of building an academically rigorous program with high standards and a clear system for evaluating student progress.

In summary, the curricular framework of Discipline-Based Art Education promotes the view of art as a highly intellectual, interdisciplinary and multifaceted discipline. The sub-disciplines of art history, aesthetics and art criticism can promote the desired outcomes of enlightenment through the discussion-based, intellectually challenging and inspiring curriculums and methods. By promoting all four sub-disciplines of art as equal and teachable to young children, DBAE advances ideas of the intellectual capabilities of children in the visual arts.

However, DBAE does not specifically advance the aspects of thinking that may most effectively and explicitly promoted the desired outcomes of enlightenment. This is

the result of the marginalization of the sub-discipline of art production; and the belief that skill in creating art requires talent. In a production-centered vision of art education, as supported by the Suzuki Method of Music Education, enlightenment can be more clearly and effectively promoted. This is due to the uniquely mentally freeing and intellectually developing nature of the activity of creating art.

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[1] Michael Oakeshott. Timothy Fuller (ed.). *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education.* New (Haven: Yale University Press, 1989) p. 66-67.

[2] "Discipline-Based Art Education" Arts and Culture Observatory: Institute for the Management of Creative Enterprises, http://www.artsobservatory.org/Educational%20Theories%202004/1.4%20Discipline-Based%20Art%20Education.pdf, Accessed 4/23/06.

[3] All four disciplines are treated equally in DBAE. The order in which the disciplines are discussed in this chapter does not, therefore, delineate a hierarchy.

[4] This is in reference to pedagogy theories such as that of Maria Montessori, whose classroom consists of a variety of educational tools that children manipulate on their own to generate understandings based on their own curiosity, inquiry and cognitive ability.

[5] http://www.artsobservatory.org

[6] Sally Hagaman. "Aesthetics in Art Education: A Look Toward Implementation" ERIC Digest, http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9219/art.htm, Accessed 6/30/06.

[7] Hagaman, http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-9219/art.htm

[8] http://www.artsobservatory.org

Chapter 4

A New Vision of Art Education

"There are moments in our lives, there are moments in a day, when we seem to see beyond the usual. Such are the moments of our greatest happiness. Such are the moments of our greatest wisdom."

–Robert Henri[1]

As discussed in the first chapter of this paper, a good foundation for an exploration of art education is the view of education as the pursuit of enlightenment. Enlightenment philosophers describe this approach as an engagement in the act of learning for the intrinsic benefits of gaining the ability to think and experience effectively: freedom of mind, a habit of self analysis, and the pursuit of knowledge of one's social and physical surroundings which all lead to the growth of self knowledge. These two ideals of enlightenment— Freedom of Mind and self knowledge—can be best pursued through an education program that encourages the habituation of particular aspects of thinking.

As discussed in the second chapter, this view combines ideas from a variety of theories of cognition. The result is a conscious engagement in the activity of thinking that starts with a sympathetic state of mind called Connected Knowing, followed by consciously distancing oneself and critically/creatively analyzing an experience. This state

of mind is called Separate Knowing. The awareness and application of the idea that critical thinking and creative thinking are not separate, but both aspects of good thinking come out of philosophical theories of cognition. Also applied to thinking is a theory from cognitive psychology called cognitive flexibility. This theory holds that information from every discipline is naturally interlinked and that good thinking entails cultivating the ability to make connection across disciplines to form new understandings.

The third chapter of my paper makes the argument that art education may be ideal for nurturing these ways of thinking and that the unique area of knowledge that creating and "seeing" art imparts justifies working to give children a high degree of fluency in the language of visual art.

Implications

This paper makes the argument that art *can* be taught, and that it *should* be taught. It can be taught because art is intellectual: not only creative, but also critical, engaging and informative about a variety of areas of experience. The implication of the argument that art is intellectual is that art is teachable, and should be taught. Creating art is not a matter of an illusive mode of thought called creativity that occurs naturally, or not at all, but is simultaneously critical and creative, connecting ideas across disciplines and areas of experience. Experiencing art fully comes through an engagement with the work: connecting with a work to learn from it fully, and then separating from it to critically/creatively examine the work and one's experience with it.

Art should be taught because these ways of thinking further the ideas of enlightenment by cultivating aspects of thinking that free the mind to think clearly and

effectively. This allows experiences to be meaningful and knowledge to be accessible and inter-related; which results in the development of knowledge of oneself through self-examination and understanding of one's surrounding social and physical worlds and one's place in them. More importantly, the enlightenment ideal of self-knowledge comes through having a depth of knowledge in some disciplines as well as a breadth of knowledge across the disciplines. This is because having fluency in one or more areas allows for more complex and meaningful learning about the world and oneself. Thus art should be taught for the advancement of intellectual abilities as well as for fluency in the discipline of art.

This way of thinking about art goes beyond what is being done in the name of art education in schools today. The curricular framework for art education that gets the closest to the ideas of the intellectual nature of the visual arts is Discipline Based Art Education. It challenges the view of art education as being solely creative, and thus un-teachable, by breaking up the discipline or art into four equally important disciplines. Of these, art history, art criticism and aesthetics are viewed as intellectually challenging. The discipline of art production is still viewed as being based in creativity and talent. Yet all of the disciplines are taught starting at a young age based on the idea that even young children are capable of thinking in complex ways about art. Though innovative in this regard, DBAE does not address the root of the problem with the general public's view of art, which is that making art is only creative and requires talent.

The argument for the relationship between specific aspects of thinking and learning in the discipline of art implies that aspects of thinking described above can be cultivated directly through creating art and do not need to be solely relegated to specific

disciplines outside of art production. This is because a conscientious and rigorous program in art education (one that is designed to develop fluency in the language of visual arts) would incorporate art history, art criticism and aesthetics into a program based in art production.

The implication of this is that an art education that is capable of cultivating aspects of thinking that help fulfill the ideals of enlightenment requires a large time commitment by the students and teachers, and good teaching: a time commitment and pedagogical approach that lie outside of what the framework of teaching in a public school could allow. However, these arguments are worthy of consideration even though they require a radical alteration from the current trend. Not withstanding the problems of commitment, these ideas should be considered by public school educators and policy makers.

A model for teaching which succeeds at achieving the high level of ability necessary to gain the intellectual benefits of a depth of knowledge in an art can be found in the Suzuki Method of Music Education. This is also called The Suzuki Method of Talent Education. By saying that talent is teachable Suzuki meant that the high level of ability thought to be only possible with the help of innate talent can be achieved with good teaching.

The Suzuki Method seeks to show the fallacy in the concept that learning music requires innate talent by showing that every child can learn to play an instrument when he or she is taught well. Shinichi Suzuki, the creator of this method, identified native language learning as exemplifying natural learning ability. Thus, in creating a method that teaches music effectively he mimicked as many aspects of language learning as possible.

Recommendations

In light of these enlightenment-driven ideals for art education and the success in teaching found in the Suzuki Method, a new approach and curricular framework for art education should be created. This method should advance the ways of thinking described above and seek to facilitate fluency in abilities to create and understand the visual arts.

For art education to have the educational benefits described in this paper children need to be able to gain a high level of ability in understanding and creating art. In public schools art is allotted too little time for any method to be effective, for it is not only a matter of how art is taught, but how much it is valued and how much time and energy the teachers expect children to commit to learning art. Also, the school model of teaching is not the most efficient at encouraging the growth of enlightenment because enlightenment is not generally the goal.

For these reasons this new approach to teaching may need to start as a private program outside of school. An ideal model for a teaching method is natural language learning, because it reflects the way we learn naturally. In following with Suzuki's success at modeling music education on language learning, art education should be able to have an equal degree of success.

Some important aspects of language learning that would be mimicked in an art education program, as with music are: daily practice, involvement by the parents in the daily practice, encouragement as opposed to criticism, learning in a community of peers through group art classes and group discussions and art shows in conjunction with daily personal practice, filling children's environment with art, just as they are surrounded by

the sound of their native language, and starting art education from a very young age to work with the propensity of very young children to learn language easily.

Similarly in terms of a curriculum, it is necessary to focus on making the learning progressive, natural, fun and intrinsically rewarding, so that there is personal motivation to learn. This New Vision of Art Education would redress our society's false views of art as being un-intellectual and requiring talent through an enlightenment-motivated approach and a curricular framework modeled on language learning.

Final Thoughts

Shinichi Suzuki had a vision of world peace through teaching music. He taught music, not to create professional musicians, but to bring joy into children's lives, and sensitivity into their hearts. I have a vision for a community and society where everyone sees the world with sensitive eyes and acts with sensitive hearts. Learning to truly see the people and natural world around us, and clearly see ourselves and our place in our world seems to me to be an ideal way to make us artists of the work of our lives by nurturing the compassion, creativity, inventiveness and clarity of mind to create beauty and act with grace.

"If one could but recall his vision by some sort of sign. It was in this hope that the arts were invented. Sign-posts on the way to what may be. Sign-posts toward greater knowledge."

-Robert Henri [2]

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[1] Robert Henri. *The Art Sprit* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc. 1958) acknowledgement page.
[2] Henri, acknowledgement page

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