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Visual Culture Art Education: Critical Pedagogy, Identity Formation and Generative Studio Practices in Art

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VISUAL CULTURE ART EDUCATION:

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY, IDENTITY FORMATION

AND GENERATIVE STUDIO PRACTICES IN ART

by

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The following individuals read and discussed the thesis submitted by student Kim Barker, and they also evaluated her presentation and response to questions during the final oral examination. They found that the student passed the final oral examination, and that the thesis was satisfactory for a master's degree and ready for any final modifications that they explicitly required.

Kathleen Keys, Ph.D.	Chair, Supervisory Committee
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The final reading approval of the thesis was granted by Kathleen Keys, Ph.D., Chair of the Supervisory Committee.

DEDICATION

To Nathan Snyder, whose inspirational curiosity and humor together with his love and support helped me to achieve this milestone.

To Linda and Willis Barker for knowing that I had to make the decisions and being there for me when I made bad ones.

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I would also like to extend my thanks to the Department of Art at Boise State University for the opportunity to serve as a graduate teaching assistant, during which time I depended greatly on Laurie Blakeslee's guidance. Professor Blakeslee's foundational course design is varied and relevant to postmodern discourses in education specifically due to her inclusion of visual literacy and visual culture exercises. Thus, I had many opportunities to observe and facilitate student development in relation to popular culture. This experience greatly influenced how I approached my work in this paper.

Lastly, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to the Boise Art Museum for the opportunity to serve as an outreach and museum educator over the past three years. The confidence and support of the educational team at the museum has inspired my learning and provided me with a framework for the practical application of contemporary art education methods.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kim Barker is a native Idahoan, who, after much travel, began her college career at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California. Throughout several moves, she continued her studies at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah and the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, Utah. After her junior year, Kim returned to Idaho where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Boise State University.

Given the opportunity to continue post-baccalaureate studies at Boise State University, Kim pursued an interest that had been with her since early childhood: art. Her studies in graphic design and photography paralleled a growing interest in filmmaking, which she explored at a grassroots level in Boise, Idaho. This combination of experiences attributed to her growing interest in community-based arts. Kim expressed her interest in community-based programs to the Boise Art Museum, an institution that, in turn, has employed Kim as an outreach and museum educator since January 2007.

After sufficient coalescing of experience in art, production and education, Kim submitted her application to the Master of Arts, Art Education program at Boise State University. Once admitted into the program, she was awarded a merit based graduate teaching assistantship. In late 2009, Kim was hired as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Language and Arts at the College of Western Idaho in Nampa, Idaho. Kim's graduation from Boise State University with a Master of Arts in Art Education coincides with her continued commitment to her community as evidenced by her art advocacy at the K–12 and post-secondary levels.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores visual culture and its emergence as a (inter-) disciplinary field of study and practice within art education. Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE), while still in the process of defining itself, inserts itself among myriad academic disciplines as well as our everyday living experiences outside the classroom. Due to its discursive nature, VCAE draws extensively on contemporary pedagogical praxis.

I advocate for the integration of visual culture, with an emphasis on popular culture, into art curricula as a means to increase the relevancy of art instruction for students. The inclusion of (popular) visual culture in the art classroom also serves as a means to facilitate the development of higher order thinking skills that can assist students in their ability to navigate the seemingly infinite clusters of signs aimed at shaping them (inside and) outside the art classroom.

I advocate for inquiry-based educational methods within the framework of constructivist theory with an emphasis on critical pedagogy and psychoanalytic pedagogy. These contemporary pedagogical models position the learner as a key agent in meaning making. By modeling questioning strategies and facilitating critical connections to course materials and student interests, art educators share the responsibility of learning with the students thereby creating a democratic community within the classroom. Connections to democratic principles are made throughout this paper as a means to communicate the several opportunities art educators have in the classroom to foster student questioning, student-initiated research, and student constructed meanings that are independent of authority and distinct from dominant ideologies.

My research focuses first on the scope of visual culture, then on contemporary constructivist pedagogies that reveal multiple access points for art educators to begin to integrate VCAE. This research becomes the foundation for several instructional resource guides written for art educators in K–16 classrooms. These guides present research on several contemporary fine artists whose work collectively makes use of (popular) visual culture and (popular) media to communicate meaning and affect social change. A focus on contemporary fine art demonstrates the applicability of a visual culture art education while at once elucidating the importance of empowering students to critically engage their visual worlds whatever they might be. Questioning strategies are provided to encourage student construction of meaning in a manner that informs student-initiated research and art making.

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INTRODUCTION

An ongoing interest in how people negotiate their environments and emerge with a sense of self sparks the following inquiry into visual culture. I contextualize my study of visual culture in education since it is within this context that many of us develop the cognitive skills necessary to negotiate our increasingly complex world. I further embed my exploration within the realm of art education, which is itself a means of investigating what is visual in terms of communicating meaning.

Anticipated Audience

My work in this paper is reflective of my graduate level studies and research on contemporary art education. As such, I have written what follows for other art educators who might be wondering what visual culture is and how it can be incorporated into their curricula. A series of instructional resource guides available in the Appendix are written for art educators who seek opportunities to integrate visual culture and contemporary art into their K–16 classrooms.

Purpose

I am presenting my research into visual culture, contemporary pedagogy and contemporary art to advocate the inclusion of visual culture, namely, popular culture and popular media, and student-centered learning strategies into K–16 classrooms. The sometimes contentious division of "high" and "low" art, of fine art and commercial art, often result in corresponding divisions within art education, which can be confusing and difficult to overcome

specifically given the amount of time educators spend tending to administrative responsibilities. It is my hope that my research facilitates connections to both traditional art methods and instruction as well student-centered, teacher-as-facilitator art methods.

Scope

While visual culture provides many opportunities to decode and reconstruct conventional understandings of the world, there is also tremendous advantage in terms of its ability to raise awareness within the student him/herself regarding internal biases and resistances to new forms of knowledge. Thus, in conjunction with visual culture, I explore rich pedagogical practices that critically examine social issues and encourage students to reflect deeply on both matters of the external and the internal. Popular culture is a primary component of my investigation. The reflexive nature of popular culture, specifically mass-produced images/artifacts, and its accessibility and relevance to our lives provides opportunity for critical analysis wherein the developing subjectivity occupies a key role in both identity construction and meaning making.

As a method of addressing the inter-subjective relationship between oneself and one's world(s), I explore Lacanian psychoanalytic theory as synthesized into pedagogical practice by Daiello, Hathaway, Rhoades, and Walker (2006). Within this framework, students recognize they have the capacity to resist mystification. Such opportunities, as they surface in the art classroom, transform students and teachers into critical citizens who through the art making process make public the underlying mechanisms at play in their lives, embedded within the fabric of their communities.

To deepen student understanding of the importance of critically engaging in one's world, I explore critical pedagogy as an integral component of what has come to be known as Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE). The critical pedagogical practice of giving to students a significant portion of responsibility for their learning destabilizes the role of educator as authority. Consequently, students find themselves in an environment that values their individual voices. Within this context, democratic principles are enacted—students become confident in their abilities to construct meaning, to decode pre-recorded messages as presented by the media or by artists, and ultimately determine for themselves what is of value. Hence, the art classroom serves as not only a venue for innovative cultural production, but also as a safe place for students to exercise the higher order thinking skills necessary in an increasingly complex world.

Project Design

I leveraged the full scope of research included in this paper to create the project portion, which is available in the Appendix. My methods in preparing this series of instructional resources included additional research into contemporary artists whose art methods and art works exemplify and further support the applicability of a visual culture art education. I also pursued visual research as means to explore connections between studio production and visual culture. And, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) guidelines for instructional resources served as a point of reference in terms of the layout and length of the instructional resources included here.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My inquiry begins with an investigation into the phrase "visual culture." The descriptor "visual" indicates an emphasis on what is seen or otherwise available to be looked at. Here, there is a tendency to think about that which is material—an extension of which might include visual media such as magazines, billboards, television, etc.—all things that exist external to a viewer. However, one might then consider the ability to visualize something in the absence of that thing—use the mind's eye, so to say. Thus, what is visual has moved interior to the self, which places the necessity of materiality into question. Though, to accept only that "visual" refers to both inward conceptions and outward manifestations of things, oversimplifies the significance of what is visual in our culture. For instance, what is seen often suggests multiple meanings much like a red apple may signify health for one viewer, but for another viewer, the same apple might suggest sinfulness. In such cases, one might search for contextual evidence in order to understand the significance of any one visual (or visualized) thing. Such contextual evidence may include other visual ephemera or extend beyond what is visual into those things heard, felt, or otherwise sensed. That which is visible implies an observer, a perceiver, someone who has the capacity to sense (and reason) in order for it to be considered at all. Thus, "visual" becomes multimodal and even more deeply embedded within and dependent upon a sentient being that is able to negotiate multiple sign systems in order to identify meaning in the visual (or visualized).

When reflecting on culture, myriad situations come to mind. Civilized and refined manners of living, enlightenment, a formal education, or a maturing of one's senses, etc., indicate a sense of cultur*ed*. "Culture," on the other hand, lends itself most naturally to ideas regarding the everyday practices in which a community engages, a shared set of values and conventions of understanding, and it even suggests a continuum of existence that lends itself to multiple taxonomic divisions of study (i.e., material culture, media culture, youth culture, etc.). Reflections on "culture" are certainly not limited to those listed, but one might quickly conclude the vastness and near impossibility of capturing the ethereal qualities that often come to characterize the cultural. To focus my investigation, I refer to the Oxford English Dictionary, which defines culture as "…the distinctive ideas, customs, social behavior, products, or way of life of a particular society, people, or period…a society or group characterized by such customs, etc., [and] a way of life or social environment characterized by or associated with the specified quality or thing; a group of people subscribing or belonging to this" (definitions 7a and b). Here, "culture" has come to encompass notions of time and place as well as production.

A rudimentary understanding of the phrase "visual culture" then might include multi-faceted, everyday *experiences* amid systems of signs that denote a given society's cultural production, which in turn suggests particular (even indiscriminate) modes of being within that society at any given moment. To further my understanding of visual culture and situate my own thoughts within the context of art education, I refer to recent literature on the topic where I find a rich annotative discourse that itself lends to the notion of a dynamic and evolving pedagogy to which I will return in later sections of this paper.

Visual Culture

Many discussions of visual culture include references to popular culture, which Tavin (2003) defines as those vernacular "images and artifacts…invested with meaning and pleasure" (p. 198) that when encountered as part of our everyday practices impress upon us various social constructions that may or may not affect our perception of the culture, the producer, or even ourselves. Given the almost oppressive quantity of images and the like in our everyday lives, popular culture has significant opportunity to shape the consciousness of large groups of people, yet the existence of such cultural phenomena need not result in a dominant, one-dimensional perspective of self or society. Rather, popular culture becomes "a complex terrain that entails struggle and resistance" (Tavin, 2003, p. 199), which in turn necessitates a critical survey of the social landscape so that one might identify the fissures within which one can explore multiple meanings, underlying assumptions, and internal biases. This social landscape is broad and while the landmarks change from locale to locale and from time to time, a common factor emerges: the landmarks are accessible and navigable to the public as a whole, which is to say, "…they are not relegated to the realm of 'high culture'" (Sweeney, 2006, p. 294).

The ubiquitousness of popular culture, especially those images/artifacts created and distributed specifically as a means to facilitate a consumer driven market, has long been the subject of debate. Siegfried Kracauer (1963/1995) likened the Tiller Girls (an early twentieth century American dancing troupe) to the capitalist production machine, which he characterized as a rational process wherein viewers or receivers of this mass produced image/product become complicit in the process in proportion to their tendency to lose sight of the individual nuances embedded within it (pp. 76–78). Once one fails to discern supporting infrastructures, one risks subsumption into the process—a potential victim to its every whim, managed by its every

iteration—where, in the context of capitalism, a consumer comes to assume a manufactured identity and further risks perpetuating a mass meditated culture. However, Kracauer (1963/1995) suggests that to gaze upon such practices in appreciation for their capacity to reveal currents within a culture is to engage the foundation upon which such spectacles take place; this engagement inevitably reveals the fault lines inherent in the process (pp. 79–81). These fractures then become the discursive spaces within which one can explore alternative ways of being. Garoian and Gaudelius (2004) reconceptualize the ambivalent nature of such spectacle as a critically informed pedagogical practice that takes as its study the whole of visual culture, which incorporates within its realm *all that is social*.

The consideration of popular, everyday vernacular images and objects and even the suggestion that these things may alter the manner in which people behave fits well within the rudimentary definition of visual culture stated in the introduction. Upon review of that definition, the term 'production' may in fact refer to more than just the mass-produced images and artifacts that clutter our everyday lives. Production, specifically within the context of art education, includes the perhaps singular outcomes of a studio art practice; whether the outcome is material or a performed symbolic gesture, the result is nonetheless a productive act that transforms the cultural landscape.

Generally, the material signs of much artistic production provide limited opportunity for one-on-one experiences. Many of these works are often placed within the confines of private collections, museums, or galleries that, even if free to the public, sometimes evoke such fear and anxiety that some people may never pass over the threshold (Freedman, 2003a). Additionally, performed works are transitory so viewers are likely unable to experience the unique act repeatedly. How do these artistic examples of production fit within a realm of visual culture

defined largely in terms of vernacular, often mass-produced, images and objects that are routinely experienced?

Tavin (2003) surveyed the field of cultural studies and art history and subsequently exposed an interdisciplinary practice that emerged in the early 1980s that explored a situational context wherein what is visual (i.e., the artwork) emphasized "the relationship between subject, subjectivities, power, and interpretation" (p. 202). These discussions fostered by works of visual art ventured into the realm of the social in terms of not only the content presented in such works, but also by allowing a space within which the viewer of such works could become a significant part of the meaning-making equation. Art was no longer a closed circuit display of fixed meaning; rather, it became an open-ended dialogic process between the subject and object. So, if art indeed "makes room" for viewers, why then do some people remain terrified when faced with the possibility of looking at art?

John Berger in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972/1977) discusses processes of mystification, which range from critical analyses of works that situate the work in a fixed history (often one that promotes hierarchical class distinctions) to the myth of reproduction, namely questioning the authenticity of artwork emerging from mechanical means. This mythologization of artwork over time has perhaps resulted in a chain of assumptions associating art to notions of "high culture," which appears to present itself as a continuing influence on how some people make determinations about art in the twenty-first century.

One cannot inquire further into the matter without referencing the writings of critic Clement Greenberg whose seminal essay "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939/1971) characterized an elite art—an art that in seeking "the absolute" (p. 5) turned its back on the everyday, commercially driven masses whose world eventually filled with *kitsch*. *Kitsch* became a "lower"

class substitute for cultural experiences otherwise reserved for the elite's privileged position (in front of modern painting)—in effect, *kitsch* catered to the consumer desires of the greater public and satiated them through "faked sensations" of participating in culture in turn for only their money (Greenberg, 1939/1971, p. 10). For Greenberg, *kitsch* is the whole of popular culture as discussed thus far including the suggestion that such ephemera subsumes people to the point they fail to recognize the reality of their experience—it is everything that is exterior to the privileged spaces reserved for rumination on "true art." Thus, notions of "high" and "low" that divided entire populations into rigid caste systems also divided art, and, in turn, such notions influence up to the present day what some people consider to be art.

Nonetheless, the idea of even the privileged gaze of a so-called upper class upon individually produced art works carefully displayed in the recesses of a private collection, gallery, or museum situates these prized objects within the realm of visual culture. In terms of accessing the significance of an artwork, the same sorts of sensibilities and reasoning used to navigate the everyday world, which is overflowing with mass-produced ephemera and multimodal messages, are required. This, of course, does not fully answer why some people approach art with such trepidation; it does, however, suggest that by providing opportunities for decoding what is most accessible in the world (i.e., popular culture), an educator empowers students to approach most any object (or discipline) with confidence in their ability to construct meaning.

Worth remembering at this point is the idea that contemporary understandings of visual culture are based on an open-ended dialogic process that occurs between the viewer and the object. This implies that meaning shifts among viewers and over time for any one viewer. This process occurs whether the object of interest is an advertisement or an abstract painting. Contrary

to the implications of Greenberg's assessment, this contemporary model provides equal access to all forms of visual culture.

Everything reviewed up to this point appears consistent with the definition of visual culture offered in the introduction. However, an important factor missing from this definition surfaced in the literature, namely that visual culture has come to encompass the study of visual culture itself (Tavin, 2003, p. 204). Such an understanding positions visual culture as a complex network of study that pushes the boundaries of any one discipline, that is critical of experience, how subjectivities form, how consciousness develops, and the practices of seeing that reveal the underlying codes upon which the producers of culture depend, around which social interactions occur. To complicate the issue further, visual culture as an interdisciplinary study takes on as its content that which is not evident, that which is overlooked or is all together missing thereby problematizing the term 'visual' (Darts, 2004).

In W.J.T. Mitchell's words, visual culture becomes a "meditation on blindness" (as cited by Darts, 2004, p. 319). In one sense, "meditation on blindness" refers to the underlying significations proffered by a culture's images and artifacts, which often translate into social codes that we identify only upon critical examination of how images and artifacts operate in a given context. Such situational studies create rich anthropological, sociological, political, and economic debates regarding the power of imagery to suggest not only cultural undercurrents, but also how producers of culture use what is visual to either maintain or transform the status quo. In another sense, "meditations on blindness" become a reflection on those things of which we are deprived and how these unaccounted for elements of culture reflect the values of a given society.

For any one person to summarize the particularities of visual culture is a daunting task. Perhaps this difficulty characterizes the field itself as a study consistently challenged to morph, anticipate, and respond in proportion to the content provided; always challenging itself to turn a critical glance on itself in an effort to maintain an intellectual rigorousness worthy of its increasingly complex and diverse subject matter. In the section that follows, I research pedagogical theories that appear to cultivate within an art classroom setting opportunities to collaboratively deliberate upon both artifacts of culture and perceptions of self. While one might argue that the whole of visual culture provides such opportunity, my specific interest is to investigate unseen/unspoken codes in a community of learners so we might negotiate new understandings of the world by identifying and exploring how we as a group of individual subjects identify and interrelate with that world.

Constructivism

Constructivism is not limited to any one or two pedagogical approaches—there are several teaching methods that derive from constructivism, but at the core of each is the understanding that students construct their own knowledge. As a consequence of this understanding, it is also accepted that "knowledge constructions do not necessarily bear any relation to external reality," yet these constructions remain useful (Driscoll, 2005, p. 388). For instance, just as a viewer may approach the same work of art over time only to walk away with a new understanding, so will students return to previous knowledge constructions only to reconstruct them. This restructuring of knowledge consists of students integrating into their previous understanding of the world their perhaps more recent experiences or discoveries.

Another useful art example of restructuring knowledge is based on the observation that when drawing an image of their house, most young artists (pre-K–3 range) place their backyard above the house rather than allowing the house to overlap the backyard. We know as adults that backyards do not hover over houses in the real world. This alone secures the highly likely outcome that over time, without specific instruction, these young artists will revisit their representations over the years in a manner that increasingly approaches a more intuitive understanding of perspective. The "useful" aspect of allowing students to explore their world according to their understanding of it at the time is that they have ample opportunity to *test* their understandings against those of their peers or even against the plethora of visual culture to which students are exposed everyday. (The hyperreal world of print ads, television, and video games will undoubtedly serve as an influence promoting the "natural" placement of one's backyard.) Imagine trying to explain to a four or five year old, or deposit-into as objectivist educational models have, linear perspective (or the law of gravity for that matter) with the expectation that the child forever relegate her/his vision of the world to that of a dominant model imposed onto her/him. What chance do students in this predicament have at becoming innovative thinkers and researchers if they are deprived of the opportunity to think and discover for themselves? On the other hand, provided with an opportunity to self-test their representations for themselves, students have ample opportunity to emulate, only to rework again, but perhaps against their own "seasoned" dispositions or preferences.

Beyond allowing students the opportunity to construct their own knowledge, constructivist theory takes as its goals "reasoning, critical thinking, understanding and use of knowledge, self-regulation, and mindful reflection" (Driscoll, 2005, p. 384). In order to obtain these goals, a primary component is the creation of a learning environment that is relevant to/for

the students; this environment should be open to diverse voices and impart ownership of

learning to the students (Driscoll, 2005). This focus on learning environments implies, as

suggested by Freedman (2003a), that learning "is situated or closely related to the circumstances

in which it takes place" (p. 80). Hence, constructivist classrooms are social environments where

students voice multiple perspectives that get bantered about and tested against one another and

against the prevailing political and economic systems at play in their lives (inside and) outside

the classroom.

The two constructivist methods explored in this paper, critical pedagogy and

psychoanalytic pedagogy both prize the elevation of the students' voices in the classroom.

Within these pedagogies, learners are invited to immerse themselves in cultural practices that are

immediately relevant in their lives only to use these experiences as a springboard for

investigating (among many things) the potentially manipulative messages disseminated around

the globe. As a result, critical thinkers emerge with confidence in their ability to decode

messages—an ability that positions these students directly within the fissures from which they

can affect change in their communities and within themselves. From this vantage point, students

can begin to construct their own understandings of what the future should hold. This is right

where constructivist art educators (critical and psychoanalytic pedagogues alike) want their

students to be.

Critical Pedagogy

Recent literature integrates visual culture and various aspects of critical pedagogy (Tavin, 2003; Darts, 2004; Garoian & Gaudelius, 2004; Sweeney, 2006). Critical pedagogy situates *participants* in a self-critical learning environment that questions dominant ideologies and seeks to reconfigure both the learner and the culture within which learners operate to create a more democratic society (Taylor, Carpenter, Ballengee-Morris, & Sessions, 2006). Popular culture is readily available and piercingly relevant to the lives of many. Thus, through the lens of critical pedagogy (which values student-centered strategies and encourages self-initiated investigations into what is relevant to students), popular culture becomes an almost expected, if not necessary, component of a contemporary art education. Because popular culture can appear as a machine that transforms citizenry into hegemonic drones through its mass manufacture of identity, it presents as an obvious milieu wherein discussions that lead to critical examinations of the emotional investments we deposit into mass produced images/artifacts and the underlying assumptions embedded within these items thrive. Thus, it is not surprising that much critical pedagogical praxis in art education centralizes on popular culture.

Revealing Hidden Meanings

Darts (2004) argues that critical pedagogues committed to social justice must attend to the networking of politics and culture—that because of the relationship between the cultural and the aesthetic, art educators are well-placed to focus attention on an ideologically driven aesthetic that we must be attuned to if we are to advocate democratic principles. For Garoian and Gaudelius (2004), critical citizenship results from "critical examinations of visual cultural codes and ideologies to resist social injustice" (p. 299). Given the emphasis on justice, the political

sphere, as a primary driver of an ideology under which citizens practice their daily routines, becomes a primary source for course content. By taking a visual inventory of what we see, hear, and equally that which is not seen or heard in the political realm, the intricacies of how imagery and sounds are manipulated to construct a social setting consistent with underlying ideologies surfaces. By focusing attention on the political sphere, students and teachers are positioned as semioticians who decode the (un)intended meanings as well as the social consequences of many of our (un)planned political events/occurrences. Attention to how we as individuals are often complicitous participants in a political ideology seemingly distanced from our everyday lives can reveal opportunities for resistance. While such political constructions are relevant in the art classroom, and they often result in powerful content with transformative potential, the principles of critical pedagogy in art education also lend themselves quite easily to other spheres of study requiring an egalitarian approach.

The mass produced commercial imagery that surmounts our visual experience becomes difficult territory to navigate as we endeavor to understand the role such images have in our society. Here, the underlying logic, while arguably political, is deftly economic and as such has a frightening amount of power in terms of reconstructing social relationships to serve corporate needs. The visual concern becomes not one of reproduction by mechanical means or representation, which have haunted our understanding of images through to post-World War II, but one of distancing and loss of representation.

Advertisers now remove products from ad-images or decrease a product's importance in the hierarchy of the ad-image so that it is nearly invisible. In both cases, products are hidden beneath a quagmire of signs indicating a *lifestyle* that originates from a product that has become so naturalized into our culture, our identity, that we no longer require a direct signifier for it

(Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Jean Baudrillard (1992) refers to this practice of "irreference" as the *hyperreal*, which characterizes the replacement of the real (in the case of an ad-image, this would be the product, or referent), by a system of signs that are algorithmically derived in absence of the actual product, thus resulting in nothing more than simulacra. If consumers have a choice in terms of what they purchase, in Baudrillard's (1992) "age of simulation," the choice is no longer regarding ownership of a tangible product. Rather, the choice becomes one of a lifestyle that ultimately aligns itself with a product—a manner of living induced by the purchase of a product, which is intended by the producer of the product to alter a consumer's behavior or perception of self for better or for worse (either of which would conceivably align the consumer with the product for life).

Matters of economic expenditures then arise not out of desire for a product, but out of desire for the simulated experience promised by a product. Unwitting participation in the simulacra only perpetuates the distancing of signs from their signification, which provides continued opportunity for social reconstruction based on market needs. Identifying and critically discussing the distancing of the real in the classroom creates opportunities to undermine and reveal the assumptions on which marketers rely. These opportunities can both inform and transform cultural trends going forward.

Taking Action

Throughout art history, artworks have also played a pivotal role in the economy. The commodification of art as experienced by artists in the early twentieth century gave cause for many artists to disrupt the economy of art, which at the time seemed to confine art to objects or reduce art to specific methods of production. Dada artists collaged and/or assembled elements of

the everyday into works embodying *life* that in turn suggested the accessibility of art in life.

These acts thus effectively undermined traditional notions of art as privileged object. This

upending of art thus created room for a broad understanding of what art is and how art can

manifest itself. Later in the century, Situationist International and members of the Fluxus

movement disrupted the cultural flow and revived creativity by giving art back to life. They

presented art and life (and all of its politics) so tightly woven as to render separation impossible,

thus art was less likely to become an object of exchange. How could it? When it belongs equally

to all?

Today, artists and activists alike upend the commodification of lived (or not, as the case

may be) experience as disseminated through signs in advertisements that seek to cultivate among

people a lifestyle that will serve the on-going needs of the advertiser, or producer—a lifestyle

forever privileged in that it remains desired by, yet inaccessible to, all. Practices such as

appropriating brand logos, billboard ads, even televised commercials, and skillfully

reconfiguring the ad-image to reveal the underlying assumptions and/or social consequences

promoted by such advertisements effectively "derail" consumer market strategies. Such

practices, if even for a moment, provide opportunity for citizens to resist subsumption into mass

mediated culture. Today, these practices are generally referred to as *culture jamming*. Darts

(2004) likens culture jamming, specifically the re-making of commercially produced culture to

reveal hidden meanings, to the concept of "artistic troubling," which undermines "our ability to

function within a dysfunctional world" (p. 319). In this context, "troubling" refers to not only the

interventionist tactics employed by culture jammers, but also the overwhelming sense of

disorientation and discomfort that arises when positioned on the receiving end of a culture

jammer's message (Darts, 2004).

Art educators using mass mediated images/artifacts in the classroom to foster critical understandings of how such things inextricably link to social relationships and perceptions of self may feel some anxiety as a group of learners seeks to recover from the recognition that long held beliefs, perhaps critical components of one's identity, may have originated *outside* of one's self. A common response to such situations is for students (people, generally) to transgress or explore the extreme opposite of what is "mainstream" in an effort to retain or obtain what is authentically one's own.

Transgressions in their outright violation of cultural norms risk the unfortunate circumstance of perpetuating other equally violent and reductive belief systems. For example, recognizing the tendency for an advertiser to oppress women does not grant permission to replace the woman with a man in the advertisement. To do so risks preserving the dehumanization of the human race, which, in most cultural climates, is unacceptable. Alternatively, to recognize the potential ecological impact of all terrain vehicles and to form a covert interventionist operation, which includes explosive devices that trigger on starting the engine, does not necessarily inspire eco-consciousness. Thus, "troubling" may also suggest an atmosphere of critical problem solving wherein teachers and students work together to not only disrupt, but also transform cultural spheres through generative and meaningful art production.

Psychoanalytic Pedagogy

Anyone who has recoiled when learning the brand name of his or her T-shirt links to far-off lands where labor is cheap, young, and trafficked among several agencies at the expense of human rights has likely questioned their affiliation with said T-shirt. The piercing recognition of such circumstances marks the gateway for exploring not only the *commodity signs* that may have led to such a purchase, but also an investigation into the likely contradictory personal investments one may have deposited into a specific brand (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). Such investigations ultimately lead to questions regarding the formation of one's identity and how, moreover, *if* one has the capacity to formulate independent, not to mention unique, thoughts that result in unmediated conclusions or representations of one's self.

Daiello et al. (2006) discuss resistance through a Lacanian informed pedagogy, which frames the desire for a commodity, a brand name T-shirt for instance, as a "false consciousness constituted by a subject's lack…originating in, and perpetuated by, the *objet a*. The *objet a* is the crux of identity… [it] is fluid and changeable, fluctuating in meaning and importance throughout one's lifetime" (p. 315). Unlike the foundation of critical pedagogy, which acknowledges that identity is shaped by one's subject position, psychoanalytically informed pedagogy views identity "as a function of a *subjective* position" (Daiello et al., 2006, p. 310) where external forces, internal conflicts, and deep seeded desires shape one's sense of self. Through this lens, one's interior life inextricably links to the external. One's understanding of self might undergo a sense of weakening and strengthening in proportion to the degree of disorientation resulting from critical examinations of one's inmost contradictory tendencies in relation to what is external (for example, recognizing one's purchase of a T-shirt aligns one with a political system that is contradictory to their personal values). Such an approach in the classroom conveys to students

that they have ownership of their desires, yet this approach remains flexible enough to allow

for unconscious desires that do not easily link to the multiple subject positions with which

students may identify (Daiello et al., 2006).

Of the many opportunities that might arise in the classroom as a result of

psychoanalytically informed pedagogy, one significant opportunity presented is that of

positioning students in relation to their environment so as to reveal to reveal to students that for

as much as environments construct them, they construct their environments. Because

psychoanalytic pedagogical praxis encourages students to take a great deal of ownership over the

personal investments deposited into things, it, in turn, offers to students a great deal of ownership

in terms of their ability to manifest change within themselves as well as the many environments

they might inhabit. Unlike objectivist models for education as explored in the 18th century where

"good" human behavior derives from the use of reason, any changes that erupt as a result of the

model proposed by Daiello et al. (2006) are likely derived from the emotional, the inconstant,

and the unknowable. Beyond the opportunity for innovative research subsequent to this

somewhat unconventional method of formulating hypotheses (even in today's environment),

such revelations will surely inspire creative and transformative resolutions with the potential to

reach well beyond one's interior life.

Complicating the terrain of visual culture by blurring the boundaries of the internal and

external destabilizes any preconceived notions of who we are, who we think we are, and, as a

consequent, destabilizes the position of the educator as authority in the classroom. Such

uncertainty and uneasiness effectively reveals within emerging art educators the inner-spaces,

which under pressure open to exploration and reflection hence new forms of knowing. Knight,

Keifer-Boyd, and Amburgy (2005) characterize this process as "a perpetual displacement of a

static identity" (p. 256), which applies equally to students. When welcomed and explored among a community of artists (e.g., in the classroom) that embrace socially-engaged examinations of culture and artistic production, which itself functions in-between states of made, unmade, worked, and reworked, such liminalities can communicate a life-long understanding that one will continually renew one's perspective of self, of the world, and their position in it.

Visual Culture Art Education

Culture jammers appropriate and reconfigure everyday popular culture in order to restructure the politics underlying much of our day-to-day imagery. Ties to Dada and Fluxus suggest art methods that continue to explore new understandings of art that perhaps incorporate exercises in appropriation and investigations into the everyday, varied, and artful experience of living. Connections to Situationist International suggest art methods that are perhaps performative in nature—interventions born in the everyday hustle and bustle that provide both a moment of reprieve from the burden of consumer culture and a shocking wake-up call educing further critique. Add to this, a revealing psychoanalytically informed pedagogy that embraces the notion of "un/becoming," which Knight et al. (2005) offer as a metaphoric term to describe the constant undoing of assumptions that visual culture educators and students undergo as they navigate complex or unknown territories, and a rich protean art making practice emerges.

Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) is firmly rooted in constructivism in part due to its inclusion of all forms of visual culture into the classroom and in part due to the role of instructor as a facilitator. An instructor-facilitator guides student inquiry with thought provoking questioning strategies that present open-ended problems for students to investigate and begin to construct their own understandings and derive their own conclusions.

Taylor et al. (2006) cite the research of Elizabeth Delacruz who explores a number of questioning strategies that exemplify the concept of "indirect teaching," which approaches learning as a form of inquiry. Key to such indirect teaching is the development of questions that elucidate from students a series of responses that can build upon one another in a manner that reveals the big ideas an instructor ultimately wants to introduce. The approach is similar to pealing back an onion one layer at a time. The benefit of approaching teaching in this manner is that multiple perspectives are available to be leveraged (or tested) against one another in order to assist students in recognizing connections to personal knowledge as well as assisting them in the construction of new knowledge. Practicing indirect teaching through inquiry can facilitate student engagement with visual culture in a manner that positions the students as critical investigators. With practice, students become apt sensory detectives who are confident in their ability to decode meaning. This, in turn, facilitates their active engagement in studio practices where the focus is perhaps less on formal expertise and technical skill and more on effectively communicating meaning, which in a visual culture art curriculum is likely reflective of students' social concerns.

VCAE takes as its primary goals critical understanding and empowerment, which are developed through art studio exercises where students initiate their research, choose their materials, and are then free to explore meaning for themselves (Duncum, 2002). VCAE challenges the emphasis on traditional formal and technical skills in art production by likening the role of student art production to that of student identity construction (Freedman, 2003b), which is always a work in progress and in relation to the external. The prominence of studio skills in a visual culture curriculum ensures students are positioned not only as critics of culture, but also as producers of culture. Art making mirrors the cognitive process of constructing

knowledge. The exploration of dominant ideologies present in visual culture often reveals hidden assumptions, which like the re-arranging of elements on a page, stimulates the restructuring of knowledge. In VCAE, these skills are developed in tandem.

To better contextualize the emergence of VCAE, a brief comparison to earlier art instructional methods, specifically Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) is in order. DBAE asserted an art education steeped in art history, criticism, studio practice, and aesthetics, and as such did not inherently distance all forms of visual culture from the art classroom. However, while opening-up artworks for critical discussion and independent meaning making, DBAE appeared at its conception to canonize art and artists, which fueled debate among social theorists and activist groups (Knight et al., 2005). Additionally, as founded on the ideals of greatness, nobility, and excellence, DBAE's "wholesale promotion of the 'greatest works of art' can be viewed as a veiled condemnation of popular imagery" (Tavin, 2005, pp. 110–111). Hence, the emergence of VCAE, which, alternatively, widely embraced the use of popular culture in the classroom thus blurring the line between "high" and "low," fine and commercial arts. Consequently, since VCAE strongly advocates a student-centered learning environment where students are encouraged to bring into the classroom the ideas and things that most interest them, the role of the educator as authority also blurs. In many cases, students will likely choose to discuss popular films, their toys, their favorite video game, etc., and not Leonardo da Vinci or Georgia O'Keefe (unless featured in popular films, of course). Instructors can use these discussions to guide students toward a critical understanding of how these images or things function as part of society.

Duncum (2002) writes of another key difference between DBAE and VCAE, namely that much traditional art education including DBAE assumes "art is inherently valuable, whereas VCAE assumes that visual representations are sites of ideological struggle that can be as deplorable as they are praiseworthy" (p. 8). From this perspective, students are encouraged to "peel back the onion" in order to develop their own understanding of art by decoding its messages, which are not presented as already or always having value. This critical approach likewise applies to the everyday images that surmount our visual experience outside of the classroom. In this manner, aesthetics becomes a social issue inasmuch as an advertiser's or artist's virtuosity effectively embeds or hides ideologies. DBAE may have set the standard for critique and aesthetics in art, but VCAE sets the standard for expanding such skill bases into multiple disciplines including life outside the classroom and gallery.

Studio

Garoian and Gaudelius (2004) suggest collage, montage, assemblage, installation, and performance art as critical elements of an "undecidable pedagogy of artmaking" (p. 308). Culture jammers work within these media when they appropriate existing print or television or radio media and subvert the meaning toward a more democratic end. The key to these media, especially when appropriating existing media or responding to an audience of viewers or would-be participants during a performance, is the number of opportunities available to position apparent dissonant parts together in order to expose and/or critique underlying ideologies or to suggest alternate ways of being.

In the classroom, the practice of de/recontextualizing appropriated images/sounds/texts or re-positioning objects in a new way or context is a continual process of doing and undoing that requires critical engagement with not only the materials used, but also careful attention to the resulting, overarching message communicated. Here, art making is situated as a process where one thoughtfully reflects on their work and remains open to changes and even accepting that some works may not be conclusive answers, but rather incite ongoing investigations that may take on new forms over the course of one's study.

Freedman (2003b) advocates that as part of studio production, students be offered as much choice as possible to ensure the resulting artworks are "expressions of the makers' ideas" (p. 41). Similarly, a key component to what Garoian and Gaudelius (2004) offer is multiple choices for artistic production as opposed to confining students to a specific production method, which can in turn confine the exploration, examination, and creative processes. The multi-media approaches suggested by Garoian and Gaudelius (2004) thus provide ample opportunity for students to restructure their existing cultural environments.

Such art studio practices mirror contemporary critical and psychoanalytic pedagogies by acknowledging an immediate, ever-changing cultural landscape both in and outside of the classroom with which teachers and students interrelate and as a result formulate, in part, a sense of their identity. The recognition that everyday images and artifacts are a vital component of our visual culture and that there are multiple equally as valid manners of artistic production serve as contemporary landmarks well suited to classroom strategies that value student knowledge and interests.

Assessment

When making available studio investigations that encourage sociocultural and interpersonal analyses, art educators may find discussing the likely varied works (backed by a student's intense need to redefine cultural barriers) in the traditional language of art (i.e., the principles and elements of design) somewhat challenging. The conventional use of terminology that indicates the fundamental elements used in art making and how the application of these elements in a work indicate a set of principles may itself require some contemporary "troubling" especially if students utilize existent media images/messages in their art. Inevitable discussions regarding form and content arise, and even if agreement that the studio approach proposed by Freedman (2003b) and Garoian and Gaudelius (2004) are likely to produce content driven work, there remains opportunity to find a language that allows students and teachers to discuss the formal evidence visible in the work in support of the content. How do art educators approach such matters of form and content in a manner that informs discursive art production?

Mie Buhl (2005), a professor at The Danish School of Education interested in exploring a language of art that emphasizes the visuality of visual culture in order to draw attention to viewing, observing, and the conditions wherein students ultimately select/reject visual information in an effort to create meaning, proposes a focus on students' *selection strategies*. The resulting meta-language repositions traditional understandings of the formal qualities of art into a context where students critically reflect on their viewing biases and production methods as a primary component of critique. Thus, as Buhl (2005) suggests, artistic production within VCAE should "be viewed as a transdisciplinary curriculum construct" (p. 112) where student decisions become critical elements of the final artwork. The reflexivity proposed here is reminiscent of early twentieth-century art movements such as Dada, specifically Duchamp's

defense of the "readymade," which presents objects as art due only to the selective prowess of the artist. If the goal, as Freedman (2003a) and Duncum (2002) states, is to challenge students' critical skills in tandem with their production skills then opening-up space in critique for discussions that take as their topic a student-artist's selection process, suggests a formative method of critique (a critique that is descriptive and formulated in accordance with student learning) rather than a summative critique that declares success or failure at the end of a project.

The traditional language of art remains a valid manner of engaging student artwork. This language when accompanied by the "meta-element" of student decision-making becomes much more of a social engagement in that critique is not limited to the formal qualities of what is seen (or heard). Rather, student artworks become emblematic of the deep "personalization of social issues" (Freedman, 2003a, p. 148) that has occurred *throughout* the creative process. Here, critique becomes an opportunity for dialogue that challenges the students' abilities to critically grapple with their ideas as well as their materials. To ensure that students own their learning and instructors increasingly release responsibility for learning to the students, there are several methods of critique an instructor might incorporate into their classroom.

Student self and peer assessments can occur alongside art production activities in the form of reflective journal entries that map student research and the progression of their ideas or small group discussions where students break from production and share their work with one another. Freedman (2003a) notes several group critique methods that ensure students remain forefront in the discovery and interpretation processes, which is key in knowledge construction and the building of higher order thinking skills:

- Scaffolding: Students generate questions they have about a classmate's work, they clarify what they do not understand, summarize what they see, and speculate on the meaning of the work. This student-centered approach encourages thoughtful reflection on what is seen and how this communicates meaning while at once revealing to the student-artist the strengths and opportunities for clarity that might exist in his/her work (p. 155).

- Student Questioning: Artists develop several questions, which they then use to initiate discussion among peers. The dialogue continues with question/answer from both the artist and the peer group (p. 156).

- Small Group Critique: Students coordinate a critique that once underway provides them with an opportunity to develop an understanding that quality, while discernable, may require in-depth discussions that include disagreement (p. 157). In using this approach in the classroom, instructors might also have their students develop the assignment objectives so that students have in mind a standard of measurement around which their critique discussion might flow.

- Peer Pairs: As a formal or informal method of critique, pairing students throughout the art production process can help them formulate and strengthen the premise behind their work while at the same time provide them with an opportunity to practice articulating their intent and methodology (p. 157).

Because most students in a classroom are socially linked by their age, their visual culture, and sometimes their interests and concerns, group critique methods in the classroom can help to ensure that student-artists' decisions remain central to the critique conversation—after all,

students have a great deal of shared knowledge, thus they can challenge one another's judgments as "experts." Providing the opportunity for students to investigate perceived injustices or other social concerns, the opportunity to restructure dominant ideologies that affect students' inner and outer worlds in conjunction with peer discussion stimulates a democratic social environment that can serve as a foundation (as a model) for a promising future in life and art.

Impediments to Integrating Visual Culture Art Education

As part of my inquiry into VCAE as a contemporary classroom practice, I researched whether the applicable theories and practices were transitioning into K–12 art classrooms. Visual culture as a field of study has gained much attention in the last decade; however, studies on the effectiveness of its praxis in primary and secondary education are difficult to find. What I did find indicates that visual culture continues to experience resistance in some K–12 art education communities (LaPorte, Speirs, & Young, 2008). This resistance may be due to misunderstanding "visual culture" to mean only popular culture, or a lack of access to VCAE in higher education, or, as Tavin (2005) frames it, an inherited art education ideology that perpetuates and imposes the stratification of culture into "high" and "low" (p. 102).

The art curricula influences research conducted by LaPorte et al. (2008) identified a direct relationship between undergraduate exposure to content areas and their subsequent inclusion in K–12 art curricula; and that teacher knowledge base and comfort levels within a content area were primary factors influencing curriculum development. The educators included in the study indicated that their undergraduate exposure was overwhelmingly DBAE and consisted largely of Western European art and Modern art, all of which far outweighed the almost rarely referenced field of visual culture (La Porte et al., 2008).

Because much art education research literature integrates visual culture, specifically politically or economically relevant popular culture, with critical pedagogy, visual culture advocates may effectively undermine the field's breadth of study with such a heavy focus on one or two facets of VCAE, which, in turn, can cause confusion (or anxiety) among educators. Nonetheless, this begs the question, why *not* popular culture? If popular culture lends itself so well to contemporary pedagogical praxis that advance critical examinations alongside studio activities with such transformative potential, then why not advocate this component of visual culture within art education? Tavin's (2005) inquiry into the "ghosts, specters, and liminal spirits that haunt the field of art education" (p. 101) uncovers a number of twentieth-century slights against popular culture, all of which continue to some degree in the twenty-first century. Such spirits not only limit what is art, but also severely bind art educators who accept as part of their mission the provision for a democratic education as kindled by VCAE.

Participants in LaPorte et al. (2008) study may not have readily recognized fine art, whether Western European or otherwise, as a component of visual culture. If true, this suggests a deficit on part of higher education to make obvious the full scope of visual culture in one's art education. The graver issue may be that if teachers teach what they learn, what they are comfortable with, and what they learn remains largely influenced by a Western European canon of "great artists," then K–12 art education risks perpetuating further the notion of "high art," which necessarily excludes popular culture from the classroom. While this complicates the overcoming of conventional practices in art education, there is the greater risk of devaluing what students bring with them into the classroom in terms of their own experiences, influences, and interests since in such objectivist models, instructors generally work within fixed understandings of what counts as art. Here, the indication may be that higher education has opportunity to

emphasize non-traditional art, artists, and methods as well as remain open to popular culture as a legitimate and critical cultural landmark with the capacity to disrupt the conventions that continue to mystify art.

The research of Donalyn Heise (2004) indicates that some art educators do not think visual culture is important and others are not comfortable including visual culture in their curriculum because they do not know how to. These findings also appear to indicate a potential deficit in the education of art educators. Hence, an aerial view of the pedagogical currents at work in higher education may suggest an overall need for a more rigorous integration of visual culture (in the broadest sense) and contemporary pedagogical praxis into the undergraduate or graduate art classroom/studio.

Pre-service art educators require exposure to a continuum of visual culture coupled with studio efforts designed to explicitly promote unorthodox affiliations, influences, and manners of production and critique in order to disrupt conventional understandings of what art is and/or how art should be taught. Moreover, these learning environments require facilitators (who, at the undergraduate and graduate level studios, are often working artists with discipline expertise) who *model* contemporary pedagogical theory so that art educators in the making have experience and a degree of comfort in terms of *how* to develop their own curricula in a manner that situates them and their later students as equally capable of knowing, as equally critical participants in an evolving cultural landscape.

The idea of the classroom as a site of collaboration among instructors and learners situates art educators as practitioners who view their position as one lacking authoritative knowledge. Up and coming art educators who experience their undergraduate and graduate advisors as *facilitators* (as opposed to experts from whom students acquire knowledge)

maneuvering the complex and unstable terrain of visual culture in the art classroom are more likely to have confidence in their own ability to address the breadth of visual culture issues that their future students will, in turn, bring into the classroom. Such experiences position evolving art educators at the forefront of their field where they can foster critical skills and new understandings that have the potential to upheave oppressive ideologies in art and life.

While a handful of universities are advocating VCAE by establishing a department of visual culture, which integrates visual culture into existing art and art education programs, there are other challenges to face if visual culture is to root itself in primary and secondary art classrooms. Funding for the visual arts is a primary concern, but also budgeting the time necessary to involve students in critical examinations and reconstructive studio practices that evolve through reflection is a concern. If public education centers on math, science, and language, then there is little time for students to become deeply critical of their visual experience in the art studio and, in turn, construct socially engaged artworks that challenge dominant ideologies. Additionally, as long as art educators work within state interpreted national standards for visual art, there is pressure to ensure assessments connect directly to pre-defined notions of what equates to success in art, which is most easily determined by the school board or the teacher her/himself rather than the students. Unfortunately, these pressures combined risk too much dependency on historical practices that often fail to recognize the multitude of possibilities worthy of exploration.

Conclusion

Visual culture is a complex area of study that overlaps with and draws upon several disciplines in order to make sense of its subject matter. As a field of study, visual culture is self-reflexive and always cognizant of the evolving sensory landscape against which it must also evolve. Just as visual culture is inconstant and always under development, so are the students and instructors who critically engage their many sensory environments.

The coupling of visual culture with constructivist theories such as those incorporated into both critical pedagogy and psychoanalytic pedagogy ensures that students are situated in a relevant, socially conscious learning environment that provides them with ample opportunity to construct their own meaning. The synthesis of visual culture and contemporary pedagogy is most prominent in what is now known as Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE). VCAE emphasizes the inclusion of the continuum of visual culture in the classroom for critique. Consequently, VCAE prepares students to become critical consumers of culture. In this model, students emerge with confidence in their ability to decode media (and fine art) messages, which, when partnered with a focus on art production, empowers students to also become transformative producers of culture.

VCAE faces many practical challenges. One such challenge is the incorporation of VCAE at the undergraduate and graduate levels to the degree that pre-service art educators become familiar with VCAE methodology and its practical applications. As evidence has shown, art educators who do not experience the breadth of visual culture or have sufficient models on which to base their own pedagogy risk limiting their future students' experiences in art, which, in turn, limits their students' capacity to operate as innovative researchers and creative problem solvers—something that would surely benefit us all.

METHODOLOGY

The literature review, which surveyed visual culture, contemporary constructivist pedagogies as well as the emergence of Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) serves as the theoretical framework for the project portion of this paper.

The project, which is comprised of several instructional resource guides, derives from a desire to connect contemporary artists across the continuum of visual culture, which in some cases translates directly to popular culture. These instructional resource guides also serve as a model for integrating indirect teaching methods and open-ended studio investigations into the art classroom. By educing such connections, I hope to bridge the gap between VCAE in theory and VCAE in practice.

Research Methods

Using the research presented in the body of this paper as a jumping off point, I endeavored to extend my research into specific artists, artworks, themes, and issues in art. Thus, each resource guide has its own works cited list in which some of the resources referenced in the main body of this paper also appear.

Visual Research

As I intently pursued a traditional research path (i.e., books, online periodical databases, journals, etc.) to formulate the main body of this paper, I simultaneously endeavored upon a less conventional (at least in academics generally) method of research; namely, *visual research*. My

visual research began with an investigation into video art, which led me in several directions

including additional inquiry into Fluxus (Figure 1) and several contemporary artists whose work

also became pivotal components of my research into visual culture (two of these artists, Candice

Breitz and Krzysztof Wodiczko, are featured in the instructional resource guides). My many

visual investigations undoubtedly colored my "traditional" research and influenced how I framed

activities in each of the instructional resources.

Figure 1. Fluxus
(source: art by author)

In my visual research, I committed myself to two forms of two-dimensional artistic

production advocated in this paper: collage and montage. (I should note at this point, that

overtime, I have come to understand montage as not only a film or video editing technique where

varying images or clips are spliced together, but also as a form of mental editing very closely tied

to the decision-making skills students practice while producing art.) I relied heavily on existent

visual media such as magazines and books. I produced a number of photocopy transfers in

conjunction with found materials, paint, pencil and colored paper to produce individual works

that mark my initial explorations into the use of visual culture in art to explore and comment on

visual culture. I compiled my artistic experiments and investigations alongside my reading notes

and various collected imagery in a hand-made visual research journal (Figures 2 and 3). I have a

long history of collecting and saving packing papers so I used this material as the foundation for

my visual journal. The material is a light paper bag brown, thin, crinkly, and generally 24 inches

wide. I cut the paper into 12-inch lengths and folded the paper over itself to create 12 x 12 inch

"pages." I use the term 'pages' loosely because the sections of paper are not bound. Thus,

sections of the journal can be removed, reworked, and/or rearranged more easily than if they

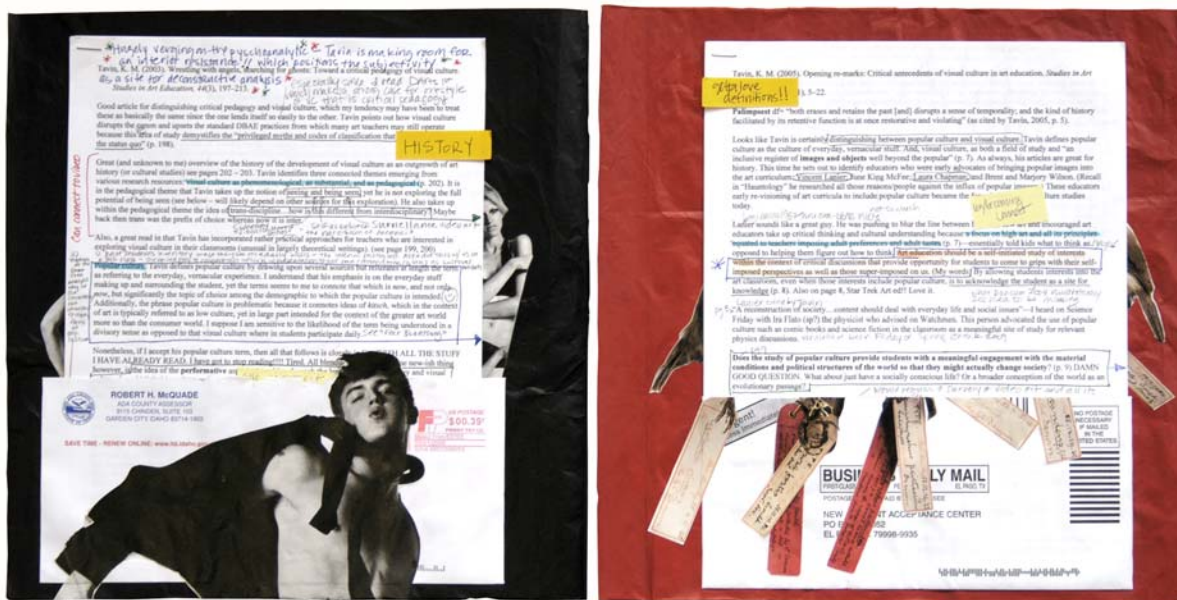were bound together in a traditional book-like fashion.

Figure 2. Visual Research Journal (with reading notes)
(source: art by author)

Figure 3. Visual Research Journal
(source: art by author)

By pursuing visual research, I found myself investigating several possibilities for any one

work that almost always placed me in a position where I had to reconcile my preconceived

understandings of the (in)significance of popular visual culture in general and the significance of

collage in particular. The collage technique together with popular culture content such as

everyday print publications *tested* (in every sense of the word) my abilities to reveal the

underlying assumptions on which advertisers rely and to re-construct these messages in a

transformative manner (as opposed to a transgressive one). I immediately recognized that my

taste in magazines confined me. For instance, I favor the fashion magazine "W" and I could not

bring myself to cut more than a few pages from any one of my 10–12 magazines that I continue

to save; this worked out in the end, because they all look the same! So, I hit the thrift stores

where I bought several sports magazines, some National Geographic magazines, museum

publications, high-end business magazines, and a handful of checkout line news and music rags.

At this point in my visual research, I spent most of my time looking for interesting

combinations of things—trying very hard to utilize strategy and "selection skills" so I might

address an issue or in the least something of import to society. This is a hard thing to do (Figure

4).

Figure 4. I'm Suffocating
(source: art by author)

As noted in the literature review, a great deal of art education research leading up to what

we now know as VCAE addresses the use of popular culture (both politically motivated news

stories and mass consumerism) in the classroom. I found reading about and discussing such uses

of popular culture to be one thing and actually doing it to be quite another thing. In my visual

research journal, among the several visual motifs I explored, I developed a brain theme (Figure

5) motivated in part by the idea that popular culture influences subjectivity (though, that

subjectivity is indeed brain-based is arguable). I also toyed with several iterations of a television

theme given the prominence of mass communicated (visual) information and its role in

establishing collective consciousness (Figure 6). I also explored some Candice Breitz inspired

collages of popular icons such as Britney Spears and Amy Winehouse (Figure 7). Because this

particular work ended-up raunchier than I intended, and at surface value, the work does nothing

to dissuade the sexy hot icon type, I recognized just how troubling vernacular publications can

be. On one hand, the hyper-sexualized image that figures such as Britney Spears assume lends

itself to an associative chain of equally sexualized content. On the other hand, the continual

representation of people positioned in a highly glamorized hyperreal context does not help to free

these people from that narrative. How effectively can celebrity icons evolve if their visibility

(literally what is seen) remains locked in place? How can we (visual consumers) evolve if we

limit ourselves to one-dimensional representations of others?

Figure 5. Unlimited Headroom
(source: art by author)

Figure 6. Re-identify 1 and Re-identify 2
(source: art by author)

Figure 7. Britney Spears and Amy Winehouse
(source: art by author)

While I cannot claim that my visual research provided clear answers to the question, "How do I integrate visual culture into my classroom?"—I can say that I became much more empathetic to students who often say that they feel too overwhelmed; that they cannot possibly decide because there are too many choices. As a result of this personal revelation, I purposefully included various opportunities to acquaint students with vernacular print publications in the instructional resources as applicable to the artist or theme presented. I also leveraged my feeling of uncertainty by providing several dialogue prompts throughout the resources to assist students with finding critical points of access into visual culture.

The artists featured in the instructional resources are currently producing work. The several bodies of work stretching over each artist's career are a part of the postmodern art discourse. I looked for artists that both interested me (i.e., served my personal artistic interests) and appeared to be working in ill-defined, liminal spaces where their art products became tangible expressions of new understandings that also pose myriad questions to viewers. I consciously edited down a list of possible artists by assessing the final grouping according to diversity in gender, age, and ethnicity. My decisions in this area are reflective of contemporary art methods that advocate the use of contemporary art and multicultural perspectives in the classroom.

While numerous contemporary artists producing work today are equally as applicable given the topic of any one of the instructional resources included in this project, my interest in artists working with photography and video is apparent. While not every artist works exclusively in these media, a great deal of the art and content covered in the resources relates to photographic practices since the 1980s. During my research, I uncovered several writings that discussed the performative aspects of photography/videography. I connected this finding to Garoian and

Gaudelius's (2004) article "The Spectacle of Visual Culture", which characterizes a

contemporary visual culture studio practice as one invested in "the conceptual strategies of

collage, montage, assemblage, installation, and performance" (p. 298). Thus, I explored

performance art in terms of consciously focusing two of the instructional resources [*Artfully*

Engaged and *Experience*^{2} (*Experience Squared*)] on topics that foster group interactivity, which

becomes the basis for performance.

Parameters for Resource Guide Development

      The standards ultimately in place for the development of the instructional resource guides

came as a result of integrating National Art Education Association (NAEA) exemplars and

standards into my primary objective, which is to connect contemporary artists to visual culture

and integrate both into a constructivist model for art education.

      Because I receive the NAEA *Art Education* journal, I reviewed several examples of

instructional resources. Each publication of *Art Education* contains one instructional resource

that contains full-color reproductions of artworks that connect to the artist(s) or theme(s)

explored in the text. The images, the artists, and themes, in turn, connect to a series of learning

objectives so that each instructional resource might serve as a practical educational source for

classroom teachers. No two instructional resources are the same in content or layout, which

suggests that authors can present information in a manner that best supports their research.

      In general, any submission to the NAEA closely follows the standards for submitting a

thesis or dissertation in art education (APA citations, double-spaced, etc.). Materials that are

submitted to the NAEA with the express intent of being published as instructional resources must

also meet the following guidelines ("National Art Education Association," n.d.):

- The text should be no longer than 2,750 words

- Material should include information about the artists and artworks including applicable cultural and historical context

- Multiple approaches to exploring art should be included in the resource

- Instructional resources should state the grade range for which the content is applicable as specifically as possible

- An evaluation component should be included

- The author must have firsthand knowledge of the artworks contained in the resource

- Submissions should not be promotional in nature

- References should include only works cited as part of the text

- Relevancy to any given theme in art education without replicating existent NAEA instructional resources

For the purposes of my work on this project, I altered several of the above guidelines so as to ensure I had the flexibility I required to meet my objective. My divergences from NAEA standards include:

- The length of each resource (of which there are five) ranges from 2,797–4,495 words. The complexity of subject matter, the challenges of integrating biographical and historical information into relevant themes, and incoming feedback from committee chairpersons all contributed to the varying lengths.

- My grade ranges may not be as specific as NAEA would have them. For example, I have resources that range from grades 9–16 and all the way from K–12, which might translate into the need to focus the investigation and instruction. If I, or another

educator, have the opportunity to enact any one instructional resource going forward, the experience would likely help to narrow the content of the resource to better match a more defined grade range.

- I *liberally* interpreted "firsthand knowledge of the artworks" as I have not had the opportunity to experience the works discussed in the resource guides firsthand (the one exception is the work of Nikki S. Lee who is a focus artist in *Acting the Part*). Had I limited myself to a conservative interpretation of this NAEA standard, I do not think I would have been able to delve as far or as deeply into the many connections that contemporary artists make with visual culture.

- While the instructional resources I provide here address relevant issues in terms of contemporary themes in art education, some of the artists I selected to incorporate into the resources have been featured in prior NAEA instructional resources. I reviewed a number of NAEA instructional resource guides based on artist name key word searches, which revealed that while my artist selection overlapped with that of other educators, my overall interpretation and integrations of the artist and/or artworks into a theme differed significantly.

The overall presentation of NAEA instructional resources as published in *Art Education* differs from my project presentation. Because *Art Education* is a print-periodical, the layout of the instructional resources adheres to a fairly standard two-page magazine grid. Because my project has been prepared within loose electronic submission guidelines for Boise State University *and* the default standard for most Adobe PDF readers is 'single page,' I have opted to layout my project on a single page grid, which means that images and/or text do not extend

across the width of two pages. My layout does not adhere to conventional thesis or print-publication guidelines for margins as the primary means of accessing my project is through online or other digital resources. Similarities between my project presentation and *Art Education* include single-spaced type and the integration of images and graphics alongside the copy. This allowed me to present information in fewer pages and make immediate connections between the information about the artist/artwork and the artwork itself.

SUMMARY

As suggested in the studies conducted by Heiss (2004) and LaPorte et al. (2008), if Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) is to become a prominent component of existing art curricula, specifically at the K–12 levels, then it must also become a featured component of post-secondary education. Because pre-service art educators depend heavily on their own educational experience (experience as students) to inform their teaching practices, an education that fails to expose these emerging art educators to the significance of visual culture (in the broadest possible sense) also fails to expose them to one of the most readily available content areas that can ensure the learning environment they share with their students is relevant to the students' lives.

Findings

The instructional resources provided in the Appendix of this paper are but one small step toward preparing myself for the always-in-flux role of art educator. Their provision in this paper is also only one small step toward advocating the inclusion of a broad spectrum of visual culture in the art classroom.

As educators, we cannot expect students to passively receive what we think we have to teach. Likewise, as educators, we cannot expect students to engage deeply with their sensory environments without ample opportunity to exercise the skills that make this possible. Therefore, we must become *facilitators* who assist students in the development of their higher order thinking skills. This will ultimately affect their growth as citizens who, in turn, are much more likely to advocate for a multiplicity of voices and innovative problem solving in art and life.

Recommendations

If art educators are to embrace VCAE and incorporate the qualities of a critical and/or psychoanalytic pedagogue into their teaching practice, art educators must also commit themselves to continued research and continued experimentation in art methods. This is not to say that instructor initiated research outside the classroom alone provides the foundation for VCAE, rather a combined interest in research coupled with the students' self-initiated research provides a much more encompassing foundation for VCAE.

If visual culture to the tune of popular culture is not already a part of one's art curriculum, it soon can be. Visual culture can be integrated over time and can begin with simple invitations to students to share their influences. Once an instructor becomes aware of student interests and influences, opportunities can be created such that these very topics become central to critical investigations that occur in tandem with varied studio explorations. Paul Duncum (2003) suggests in his instructional resource *Visual Culture in the Classroom* the use of family photos (often a site for struggle between silence and voice, ideal and actual), consumer goods (a contentious site between one's perceived self and one's manufactured self), tourist souvenirs (a central component of the globalization discussion), and students' bedrooms (a site for refuge and idolization of media messages). Each of the topics suggested here are within grasp of both the educator and the learner and as such serve as viable entry points to VCAE.

If indirect teaching methods are not already a part of one's classroom strategy, there are several steps one might take in order to integrate these methods into their day-to-day teaching practice. These steps might include:

- When presenting artworks to a class, before doing anything else, ask the students what they see. Follow-up with other questions such as what the various elements they see might mean. Continue to guide students toward building an understanding of how each element functions as part of the whole. Throughout this process, reveal a fact or two about the artist or the artwork then guide students toward restructuring their previous knowledge given the new information. In this manner, students are *participants* in a formal critique. Students have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge as opposed to being repositories for information.

- When moving into a new unit of study, provide to students the overarching idea or theme of the unit. Have students perform their own research in advance of introducing the unit in its entirety. To kick-off the new unit of study, ask students to present their findings. When comfortable with this method, begin to integrate the students' research into the lessons plans that will be used during the unit. Here, students are positioned as valuable contributors to their education.

- Ask students to create the objectives for a class project. Instructors can guide students toward selecting objectives that serve the course objectives and that are measurable. In these situations, students are well prepped to self-assess or peer-assess the work produced.

Regardless of one's current curriculum and/or teaching methods, a simple step toward building a classroom of learners that come to value their skills as students (as citizens) and value their unique perspectives in art (in life) is providing time for students to reflect on their work. As constructivist theory suggests, learners continually restructure their knowledge. When students

reflect on their work, they are able to reassess their thinking, their processes, and are more likely to arrive at a renewed knowledge base from which their future growth will occur.

Lastly, instructors might disclose to students (of every age, in every discipline) *how* learning occurs. As contemporary educational models work their way into K–16 classrooms, student bodies will come to know that their participation in the learning process is required if they are to learn at all. Because the integration of new learning methodologies can be a slow and arduous process, several generations of students are likely to not experience a constructivist based learning community in every grade. Thus, a simple "learning outline" at the beginning of each progressing grade, of each progressing unit of study, that reminds students that they learn best when they personally connect to the material and become participative in the construction of the new materials may help to re-engineer the classroom into a collaborative learning environment where students and instructors share the responsibility of education.

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APPENDIX

Instructional Resource Guides

Introduction

The instructional resource guides that follow are reflective of my interest in finding applicable ways to integrate visual culture into the art classroom. The research and suggestions, including the juxtaposition of artists and/or themes, provided here merely scratch the surface of possibility. Likewise, because the information presented is reflective of *my* interests (my pursuits, my journey), I recommend that art educators who happen to peruse these resources also independently research the artists/themes I suggest as well as additional artists and/or works that best suit their classroom dynamic. In this way, these guides may simply be considered starting points for educators who want to integrate visual culture into their classroom and studio.

Each guide focuses on a contemporary artist or theme. Artists and themes were selected based on their perceived relevancy to students (and my interests in art). For example, as a grassroots filmmaker tasked with set design and wardrobe duties, I explore constructed realities in *Acting the Part*. Students are provided with several opportunities to explore facets of self and other in a non-autobiographical manner that is intended to facilitate the understanding that identity and perception are things that will likely shift throughout one's lifetime. As is particularly evident in *Acting the Part*, the artists and themes throughout the several guides strongly connect to the research contained in the body of this paper. Thus, these guides can also serve as examples of content and methods that are constructivist in nature and widely embraced in Visual Culture Art Education.

Artfully Engaged explores artists and artworks that are first and foremost social interactions and as such this resource poses to students the question: "Is this art?" Suggestions for studio exercises range from Fluxus inspired food events, the use of social media to coordinate a social interaction/performance, the publication of manifestos, and the creation of print (or

digital) documents in support of interactions/performances. Examples of how the content might be adapted across K–12 audiences is provided.

Candice Breitz is the featured artist in *Popular Constructions*. Her work is positioned as a backdrop against which students can come to understand both the influence of popular culture and the potential popular culture has in the hands of an artist. The activities suggested as part of this guide require students to engage in not only popular culture, but also to investigate appropriation and Fair Use, which further empowers students to rework and revision the existent world.

Advancing Democracy focuses on engaging students with their communities. Krzysztof Wodiczko serves as an example of a socially engaged artist whose work uncovers hidden truths and provides a voice for the disenfranchised. The key to this guide is the idea that public spaces *belong to us* and it is up to us to use them in a manner that ensures our (collective or individual) voices do not go unheard. Thus, a model for actuating democratic principles is presented.

The majority of the guides presented here are designed in content and approach to serve grades 9–16, which led me to include as a resource topic something that has been of interest to me over the last years: stop-motion animation. On this topic, I have had the opportunity to work with both undergraduate students as well as students who are age 6–11. I am happy to report that of my experiences those involving K–5 aged students were most rewarding. I am humbled by the acuity with which young minds so quickly engage movie making. Hence, *Experience²* explores the work of a contemporary artist using stop-motion techniques, which translate seamlessly into a playful, K–5 student-run-movie-making classroom.

In response to Kerry Freedman's (2003) *Teaching Visual Culture*, where in chapter three she explores time as a "multidimensional space… which various cultural groups inhabit and influence as their ideas coexist and collide" (p. 48), this instructional resource explores the theme of interactivity as suggested or enacted in various Fluxus works as well as contemporary artworks such as those facilitated by Rirkrit Tiravanija in the 1990s and Oliver Herring over the last decade.

Freedman's investigation of time as multidimensional occurs within the context of the study of art history, which when taught chronologically (as if art and artists were discrete units suspended outside the cultural milieu in which they lived) risks under representing the many interdependencies and cross-pollinations occurring between people and cultures. On a more localized or micro-level, multidimensionality can be utilized as a lens through which one gains access to artworks that are first and foremost *interactions*. Art having as its basis an interaction among people or between people and (art) objects relies heavily on cultural associations, creative interpretations, spontaneous extensions of existing knowledge not to mention a reconceptualization of the context or structure within which flurries of social activity can flourish. Additionally, since much artwork that involves interaction or *social production* is somewhat ephemeral in that the art occurs only when *participants* are present, there is an increased awareness and attention given to human factors and our ability to establish mutual paths of understanding with one another.

An introductory exposure to art as social production for K–12 classrooms has multiple entry points and can easily dovetail into extended discussions across a wide range of topics where students delve deeply into the global contexts within which these art forms have gained the attention of the art world over time. For the purposes of this instructional resource, two art historical periods in which interactivity foregrounds the work are proposed. Students are introduced to artworks and artists who emerged in the 1960s under the moniker Fluxus as well as two artists whose work since the 1990s has increasingly focused on social engagements to the point that the boundary between art and life is blurred. Experientially based art and participatory or "use" art where one might question if the activities are indeed art or life are suggested as culminating studio explorations. Consequently, the primary reading of the art and artists proposed here educes multi-sensory experience and social engagement as focal points.

The bringing together of two non-contiguous periods in art history is not intended to imply a direct relationship. Rather, the comparison suggests that over time artists have emphasized the very real, concrete, tangible expressions and interactions among people and between people and (art) objects. Many of these ecological investigations are fueled by political and economic concerns both globally and within the art market itself and as such the art and artists are not precise equivalents as they cannot be completely divorced from the complex cultures within which they produced their work. Dialogue points are suggested for extended discussions; however, because the content of this resource is introductory at best and focused on limited facets of the art presented, instructors are encouraged to independently research and reflect upon the concepts introduced and perhaps integrate additional student-initiated research topics that can deepen student understanding of the eras lending to the production of the works discussed.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

! Develop artful "relational" experiences

! Describe, analyze and interpret the work of Fluxus artists

! **Investigate *experiencing* art vs. *looking at* art**

! Explore the hand-made, do-it-yourself (DIY) aesthetic

! Describe, analyze, interpret and compare contemporary "relational" art to other art/artists working in a similar vein

FLuXus: a framework for experience

Hannah Higgins, daughter of Fluxus artists Alison Knowles and Dick Higgins, weaves together a story of Fluxus that elevates the experiential nature of Fluxus well above the perhaps more commonly known political perspectives of George Macuinas, a lead proponent and key figure in the Fluxus movement. Higgins's narrative positions experience as "simultaneously embedded in human consciousness and in the situation that makes a specific experience possible" (2002). Via an intense investigation of Fluxkits (Figure 1)—collections of items meant to be touched, read, heard, sniffed and otherwise pondered—Higgins argues the ontological and pedagogical importance of primary (sense) experiences as pathways to understanding one's place in the world; as conduits through which we might begin to reach "all the way to objects themselves" (2002, p. 37). The unmediated (experiential or sense-based) truth that Fluxkits offer serves as a contemporary, postmodern example of art in support of John Dewey's 1934 lectures on the Philosophy of Art inasmuch as Dewey contests the idea of lived experience as distinct from and somehow less "true" than the mental conceptualization of things (1934/1980).

Figure 2. *Ay-O*, Finger Box, 1964
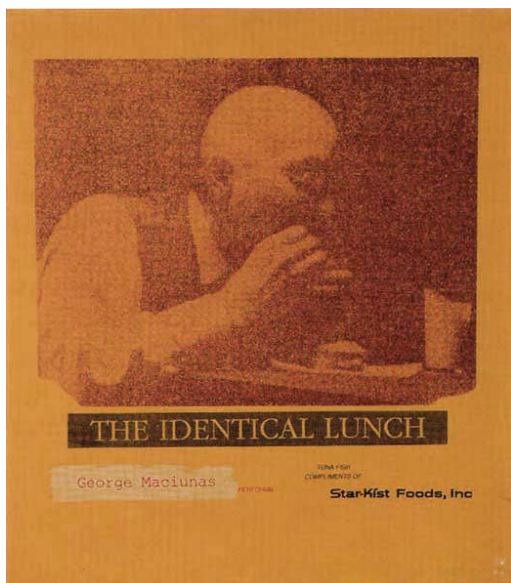(source: http://aesthetic.gregcook-land.com)

The physical interaction with Fluxkits and the even more compelling *Finger Box* (Figure 2) where information is simultaneously received and transmitted through touch may, upon initial review, appear to offer only distinct inequitable, even relativistic, experiences. However, Higgins reveals all of these works, specifically *Finger Box* where unknown stimuli ignite a chain of associative responses, as inherently social in that "they are premised on the shared experience of unseen materials" (p. 42). Moreover, while we might enjoy the notion of uniquely experiencing an object, a number of our tactile responses trigger what amounts to a culturally defined response. For example, even the gentle touch of an unseen, unknown item where first contact is between fingertip and sharp point can trigger an "Ouch!" even though one's careful investigation staved off pain. Hence, in the least, a shared experience whether in part culturally defined or otherwise materially connected provides a locus for discussion where collective, socially constructed conclusions can be drawn.

Another Fluxus staple brimming with multidimensionality is the Event performance. Fluxus Events were realized in a variety of ways, though one particular vein of Events useful to this discussion utilized food to elicit participant responses "that challenge culture-wide gustatory expectations and expand personal experience" (Higgins, 2002, p. 47). Fluxus artists Alison Knowles, Ben Vautier,

Figure 1. Various artists. *Fluxkits*, ca. 1964; designed and assembled by George Macuinas (source: http://www.smashingmagazine.com)

George Macuinas to name but a few upended conventional dining experiences by designing meals of varying taste yet similar visual representation and consistency (such as clear foods or a variety of foods presented in the same color), the mislabeling of foods to disrupt the relationship between the signifier and the signified, or Vautier's *Flux Mystery Food* amounting to an array of unlabeled cans the contents of which Vautier consumed as part of the 1963 Fluxus Festival in Nice (Higgins, 2002). While these Events problematize traditional art classrooms looking to experience art first-hand, a number of students and instructors alike may have had similar experiences at a grocery

store where unlabeled cans inevitably appear on a reduced price rack. Is there a sense of repulsion even though the contents of a given can are unknown? Do you mentally calculate the probability of the contents being something tasty? Is there a " thank you!" for the opportunity to experience the unknown? Furthermore, what does it say about our culture that a thing is worth less if unnamed?

Fluxus food events offer rich anthropological studies in terms of the social relationships that develop in the kitchen, at the table, through conversation about food, and the memories and experiences brought to mind by taste and smell. From an artistic perspective, reinterpretations of traditions, a critical eye, and a sensitive approach to multi-sensory response must be considered throughout the design and development of such events. Additionally, because there is such a rich history behind the sharing of food, the context in which such experiences are coordinated must also become a primary component in the equation. In this manner, food events become a part of the art conversation, which will surely become more intriguing as students begin to ask questions about the very nature of art.

Relational Aesthetics: a framework for interaction

Nicolas Bourriaud developed a system of critique for a generation of artists recognized in the 1990s for their then edgy audience-as-participant-in-art works. Bourriaud's framework, developed in the mid-nineties, is commonly known as relational aesthetics and "takes as its theoretical horizon the sphere of human interactions and its social context" (Bourriaud, 2006, p. 160). Bourriaud's critique hinges on a Marxist understanding of *interstice* as a locus for trading and bartering—spaces for (social) exchange that propose alternatives to prevailing capitalist systems, our ever-compressed urban spaces, and the increasing mechanization of daily life.

Relational art explores the slivers of time and space that, while not completely free of greater systemization, illustrate moments of reprieve—it brings together micro-communities; it invites viewers to become a part of the aesthetic experience; and, most important to this discussion, relational art celebrates *presentness*. Relational artists carve out space-times where people converse, exchange experiences, and ideas that in turn fill these spaces with a festive and contagious spirit. These gatherings are marked with uncertainty yet carry with them a faith in human interaction. In this way, these experiences hint at the utopian notions that infused much twentieth century avant-gardism; however, instead of establishing ideals for being, these artists provide tangible, concrete, inhabitable spaces that serve both as "a starting point and a point of arrival" (Bourriaud, 2006, p. 166) for collaboratively exploring life's possibilities.

An introduction to just one of the artists working in this era of relational art follows. The work of artist Rirkrit Tiravanija assists in understanding how relational experiences connect to the basics of being human, which in Tiravanija's case involve what appear as authentic extensions of self and fundamental neighborliness.

Rirkrit Tiravanija (pronounced RICK-reet Teer-a-van-ee-ja), born in 1961 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, experienced a variety of cultures as a boy who traveled with his father to places such as Ethiopia, Thailand, Canada and the United States. Tiravanija currently serves as a professor in the visual art department at Columbia University though he maintains a permanent residence and studio in Bangkok, Thailand. He is a founding member and curator of Utopia Station, a collective project of artists, art historians, and curators that first presented at the 2003 Venice Biennale with over 150 artists' works. Tiravanija is also president of an educational-ecological project known as *The Land Foundation*, located in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which is an emerging social project seeking to cultivate a space for sustainable social engagement.

In 1992, Tiravanija cleared the New York, 303 Gallery's office and installed a makeshift kitchen from which he cooked Thai cuisine to be given away for free as the title *Untitled (Free)* (Figure 4) suggests. Unlike Fluxus meals, Tiravanija's kitchen (the plural kitchens may be better suited as this installation launched a series of food/kitchen works) established itself within gallery walls. One might argue that situating what is now aesthetically understood as a respite from dominant systems of exchange at the very site of capitalist exchange (i.e., the gallery system) is counter-intuitive and somewhat undermines Bourriaud's critique. This may be true; however, additional investigation is warranted: The 1980s art boom crashed, how does this inform Tiravanija's *use* of a gallery? Of those people who take

Figure 4. *Untitled (Free)*, 1992/2007
(source: www.papermag.com)

advantage of free admission into galleries, how does all of this freeness interrupt their world view, their understanding of art? When strangers gather at tables and jovial conversations fill the gallery space day after day *even in absence of the artist* [who in later re-creations of *Untitled (Free)* hired stand-in cooks (Saltz, 1996)], who "controls" the artistic production? Is there a bridge or a void between art and life? Is life art and art life?

Tiravanija's works ask viewers to interact and increase their awareness of the world through multiple sense readings. While the wafting odors of finely made Thai foods varying in texture, consistency, spice, and taste filled Tiravanija's kitchens, works such as *Untitled (D)*, 1995 consisted of a "party shack" filled with instruments intended for use, intended to fill the entire exhibition space with sounds ranging from the raucous to the harmonious. Unfortunately, people were hesitant to become a part of the installation (Hainley, 1996), which, as part of the Whitney Biennial, likely gave rise to feelings of discomfort at the thought of being judged by viewers/listeners of the work (consequently begging the question, why does connoisseurship continue to define how we respond to art?).

Similar to the trepidation one must overcome when considering digging into an unmarked can of food, Tiravanija's works challenge us to reacquaint with child-like wonder and a curiosity of the unknown. Even as some works stump viewers and fail to transcend conventional responses to art (do not touch, no talking, autonomous pontification), an initial purview of Tiravanija's oeuvre reveals numerous favorable reviews particularly in response to his works involving food. Again, given the important role food plays across cultures, constructing successful artful experiences where food is central to human interaction is not exactly surprising.

In an interview with Nicolas Bourriaud, Bennett Simpson (2001) describes artists like Tiravanija as "postpolitical producers of cultural services" (p. 47) where the recipe for success includes the marrying of people to a context wherein human activities take shape and subsequently give form to the art. While there are many examples of artists working within the postpolitical landscape of relational aesthetics, another more recent exploration of multidimensionality and interactivity that extends the conversation regarding the stability of art as distinct from life or the artist as distinct from audience is found in the work of Oliver Herring.

Oliver Herring

Oliver Herring (b. 1964, Heidelberg, Germany) received his BFA from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, England. He later earned his MFA from Hunter College in New York (1991) where he continues to live and work. Herring, trained as a painter, works across multiple media. He has increasingly relinquished control of his art by spontaneously engaging strangers and by placing art materials directly into the hands of viewers. By allowing viewers to construct art objects themselves, such as a series of collaborative photo-sculptures that are part of a current tour of his work (Sheets, 2009), Herring blurs the boundary between artist and audience.

TASK—one of Herring's most recent investigations—tests the limits that people impose on themselves as well as the depths to which people are willing to free themselves. TASK creates a participatory structure

Figure 5. Unknown artist, TASK flyer/poster for a Minneapolis, Minnesota TASK party
(source: http://oliverherringtask.wordpress.com)

wherein any number of people might engage to interpret, create, recreate, and generate continuous interactions through the invention of new tasks.

TASK involves the most simple of materials and procedures: gather people in a space with some stuff (clothing, paper, tape, wood, aluminum foil, and so on and on and on…) and a "task pool" where a variety of tasks are written on several small papers (cover yourself in art, write an opera, build a tree house, dance with everyone and so on). The idea is that every person who takes a task must then add a new task to the pool and execute the one taken. The result is a community performance where people:

> … express and test their own ideas in an environment without failure and success (TASK always is what it is) or any other preconceptions of what can or should be done with an idea or a material. People's tasks become absorbed into other people's tasks, objects generated from one task are recycled into someone else's task without issues of ownership or permanence. ("What is TASK?", 2008, para. 3)

Figure 6. TASKTOPIA, 2009 (photo by Alex Citrin) Saratoga Springs, New York (source: http://oliverherringtask.wordpress.com)

TASK began in 2002 and has occurred throughout Europe and North America including the Hirshhorn Museum (2006) and Fluxspace in Philadelphia (2007 and 2008). A quick review of Herring's blog (http://oliverherringtask.wordpress.com) or a search for "TASK Herring" on YouTube and one can see the broad range of (re)interpretations of these "events" or parties, which occur across gallery spaces and university campuses even in absence of Herring.

TASK participants such as those at the SF Task (2008) party creatively interpret the directives pulled from the task pool. One young man chooses to draw an eye on every other participant's hand with eyeliner as opposed to (conventionally) applying eyeliner to every person present. Here, the participant is responding in full faith to the task to apply eyeliner, yet he is cognizant of the social grouping and the potential to interrupt a convivial event by introducing thoughts of conjunctivitis and such. Moreover, the application of an additional eye suggests the gift of enhanced vision. Whether the third eye provides access to greater external awareness or allows for deeper internal reflection, the gesture is fitting and empowering given the structure of this event. As evidenced in the SF Task videos, the inspiration, investigation, exploration, development, and creation of art whether in the form of two-dimensional works, sculpture, or performance resides solely with the participants.

TASK epitomizes Freedman's characterization of multidimensional spaces in that ideas find a community of collaborators only to collide, mash-up, remix, smashup, and eventually become tangible evidence that human interaction may very well provide the fastest, surest path to our future.

Like Tiravanija's work, Herring's introduction of TASK to the art world seemingly undermines traditional understandings of what constitutes art or defines an artist; however, given the decade prior in conjunction with the gallery spaces hosting TASK events today, works involving social production appear almost common. If so, what will be the next "new"? Where is art/life, life/art, or simply art going? What is it doing? Furthermore, one might start to wonder how the economics of today's art market, which is filled with both object and non-object art, are structured.

Undoubtedly, there are numerous avenues available for researching such questions, though one path that pops forefront to mind has more to do with our increasingly global network (i.e., the Web) than anything. Chris Anderson (editor-and-chief of *Wired* magazine) has published books and blogged about the developing digital economy and the systematic use of "free" as a platform for profit. With the increased use of the Internet to identify not only products, but also people, the idea of galleries capitalizing on this communication network while at the same time perhaps depending on the notion that if people come (for free), people will then buy (art objects) may find justification. Likewise, artists like Herring who place their ideas into the hands of others, might also be operating within a similar economic philosophy. What portion of interactive artists' art culminates in an object vs. non-object form? How do these artists' careers change once they give away their ideas or turn over their materials to conceivably non-artists? Can we adequately map an art history where the art is globally disseminated, where the art is ephemeral or virtual as opposed to actual? What might we next anticipate in terms of an art genre, era, art world, or art market?

Art for the Senses

Fluxkits and other experiential art forms such as *Finger Box* easily integrate with other skills and learning that younger age groups (especially K–3) may already be experiencing in the classroom though this isn't to say that all age groups would not benefit from the multi-sensory exposure suggested by these Fluxus works. Additionally, Events whether in the classroom or in an area suited to a larger (participatory) audience can help to accentuate the concept of multidimensionality on a local level.

Engage the students in a dialogue that will help to expand their ideas about art beyond the visual:

Where do you see art? When are you allowed to touch the art? Have you ever experienced art that has smell or sound? Describe.

How is looking at a piece of art different from touching, hearing or smelling it? What new things do you learn when you can do more with art than just look at it?

Many Fluxus works are now in private collections and on loan to institutions where much of the art is only for looking. How do you think your experience is affected if you can only see an Ay-o Finger Box as opposed to using the finger box?

Have you ever been to a big gathering where you had dinner? Describe the experience. Have you ever thought that the gathering or even the food could be considered art? Why/not? Imagine that these engagements are art, who is the artist? What is the art?

As a studio exploration into experiential art, social interactions, and experiencing the day-to-day with a new understanding, students might create a Fluxus-inspired collection box where various bits and bobs related to students' interests find a home (George Szekely writes extensively on the importance of children's collecting in his 2006 book *How Children Make Art*). Students can show and tell and invite others to sift through the contents and handle the various items. Or, students might create a variety of art pieces that can, in turn, be collected together into a "kit."

Students might be divided into groups and asked to develop a group installation where various hidden substances are enclosed in boxes with armholes. The class could even begin to toy with the senses by posting contradictory or suggestive images and text near the "arm box." For example, text about worms coupled with images of worms positioned above a box containing only cold spaghetti can inspire a gamut of emotional responses in advance of students attempting to discern the actual contents of the box[1].

Taste and smell can be explored through something as simple as Jelly Belly® jelly beans—imagine the discussion as students reconcile a bright colored, near odorless candy that tastes like bacon! Or, larger events designed around any number of foodstuffs concocted in myriad ways can serve as fitting contexts for conversations about art and experience.

activities

Art as Social Production

Students who are prepared to take on the postmodern role of artist as cultural services coordinator can explore the many opportunities available to design and develop a social event, which, like that of Tiravanija or Herring, entails creating or isolating a multidimensional space for human interaction.

Many students, particularly those having a robust relationship with various social media, may be familiar with flash mobs, which recruit people (often strangers) online. According to a set of instructions, flash mob participants show-up at a given place and perform in some way without sure knowledge of who else is involved or what else may happen. Other virtual planners such as those behind ImprovEverywhere.com coordinate performances that are engineered to interrupt the daily humdrums or exude sweet-sticky-feel-good-neighborliness to ensure that their "events" are memorable experiences or that specific (unsuspecting) people have a memorable experience. Of course, students might also choose to coordinate a TASK party for the school. The possibilities are limitless.

Instructors can ask students to research further some of the historical context suggested throughout this resource either in advance or in tandem with the development of a social event of their choosing. While multi-sensory or interactive art is not unheard of in the art classroom, it can result in new understandings and spur new questions about art in which case a reflective dialogue regarding the students' activities would be in order.

Possible talking points might include:

What tools did you use in planning your event(s)? What issues or challenges did you face? How did you overcome these?

Describe the range of emotions you experienced during the development, planning and execution of your event(s). Did you anticipate or hope for specific things to transpire? Were the participants as engaged as you had hoped? Did you ever fear that people would not be interested or have a "good" time? What surprised you or caught you off-guard?

Did you know how you would measure success in advance of the event? What were your criteria? How do these criteria differ from how you have measured your traditional art studio production in the past? Describe where/when/how your event became art.

Where do you, if you can, draw the line between art and life? Do social productions and interactive engagements deserve a place in the art world? Explain.

DIY Publication

DIY (do-it-yourself) publication has marked a great deal of twentieth century art and has since been recuperated into many commercial publications. However, manifestos, pamphlets, newsletters, posters and zines[2], and more recently blogs and other social networking sites, continue to effectively communicate independent philosophies of art or network one's opinions on any number of topics or simply commemorate or advertise an event (Figures 3 and 5). These materials range from the hand-made to the professionally manufactured.

Early Fluxus had a tremendous focus on graphic material and written communication and could easily foreground a conversation about DIY publication for any age group (see Figure 7). More recently, one might explore the post-punk ethos that infused much arts production in the 1980s and eventually crept its way into today's urban centers in the form of underground music, zines and sticker-bombing[3], which might be of particular interest to secondary age groups. For students who cannot bear disconnecting from the network, blogs, vlogs, email, tweets, etc., can also play a pivotal role in interactive art.

Figure 7. George Macuinas, *Manifesto*, 1963
(source: www.arpla.fr)

Students engaged in the coordination of a social production project might also investigate DIY publication as way to publicize their project. For students who prefer less socially engaged activities, research and reflection on the art historical periods discussed in this resource might manifest itself in a hand constructed (or computer generated) newsletter or pamphlet that shares the historical context for another student's event. Students might even map their communications and investigate how attendees learned of their event as documentation of their projects. Also, students who are considering a career in art might create a manifesto that provides a framework or theoretical lens through which their art production can be understood. As a culminating activity, instructors can involve the classroom in a group discussion ranging from the formal qualities of the materials produced to debating the ideas suggested in print or enacted during an event.
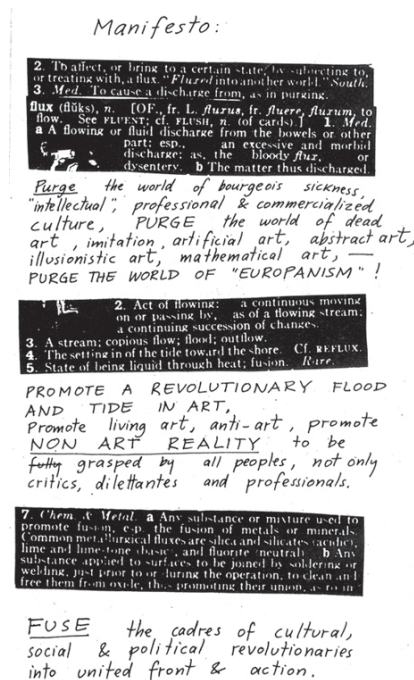
Conclusion

Various periods across art history find artists exploring multi-sensory experiences. While these periods are not fully interchangeable, they commonly suggest that sensory-based interactions are an art form to be explored and nurtured. Likewise, art as social production hints at varying concerns in relation to the art market, industrialization, urbanization, prevailing political and economic systems and as such render art as a socially engaged practice.

Experientially-based art and the multidimensional spaces created by artists for social interactions provide a context for what John Dewey (1934/1980) characterizes as esthetic experiences in that participants are just that: participative, involved, merging and re-emerging—simply, students engage on multiple levels with objects and/or each other—something instructors across disciplines look to endear.

Per the suggestions provided in this resource, instructors can observe the growth of their students as evidenced by an increased willingness to explore beyond culturally defined responses or codified comfort zones or to become participative in social activities. Imaginative and critical discussions can lead to more in-depth research projects that are formally written or presented to the class. And, the application of new skills or the extension of previous skills, especially if students become self-publishers, allows instructors to integrate a formative assessment of their students' formal skills.

End Notes

[1] As a graduate teaching assistant in a classroom of undergraduates studying the foundations of 3D design, I witnessed such an installation. As would-be participants approached the work, there appeared a physical tightening of their bodies while at the same a good-natured humor (even exuberance) as they first attempted to peer into the box then reach tentatively into it. The physical interaction between person and object under the guise of something else proved a compelling experience that took viewers beyond the visual.

[2] "Zine" short for fanzine or magazine. Zines are generally self-published with an often obvious hand-made, low production value, DIY aesthetic. While zines can exist for any topic, any one zine is likely to contain niche content. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zine, while under-cited, provides a number of examples of zines.

[3] See Art Education, Vol. 61 n.2 for Kathleen Keys article, *Contemporary Visual Culture Jamming: Redefining Collage as Collective, Communal, & Urban*. Sticker bombing is a form of urban communication that could also be a collective tagging effort across geographic locations. As sticker bombing may be considered graffiti, disclaimers to students are encouraged. Though, students might handcraft their own stickers and make them publicly available for use or "bomb" a designated area in the classroom or school.

Resources

http://www.youtube.com/

http://oliverherringtask.wordpress.com/

http://www.gavinbrown.biz/

http://www.thelandfoundation.org/

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popular constructions

Kevin Tavin (2003) in his article *Wrestling with Angels, Searching for Ghosts: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Visual Culture* defines popular culture as those vernacular "images and artifacts…invested with meaning and pleasure" (p. 198) that when encountered as part of our everyday practices impress upon us various social constructions. Given the pervasiveness of images in our everyday lives, popular culture has significant opportunity to shape the consciousness of large groups of people, yet the existence of such cultural phenomena need not result in a dominate, one-dimensional perspective of self or society. Rather, popular culture becomes "a complex terrain that entails struggle and resistance" (Tavin, 2003, p. 199), which in turn necessitates a critical survey of the social landscape so that one might identify the fissures within which one can explore multiple meanings, underlying assumptions, and internal biases toward new forms of knowledge.

The commercial imagery that surmounts our visual experience becomes difficult territory to navigate as we endeavor upon understanding the role such images play in society and how these images inform who we are as individuals. Art educators who seek to empower students to navigate this increasingly complex landscape and to equip them with the tools necessary to resist, to reveal, and push the boundaries of conventional understandings of themselves as well as others can challenge students to scrutinize popular imagery in a manner that both informs and transforms.

Artist Candice Breitz routinely draws from popular culture as a means to critique its influence on identity. Her artworks investigate the tension between the desire to be oneself and the desire to be like others and as such seem to operate at the very site of the struggle. Educators who use this instructional resource are encouraged to review what is provided here and to initiate additional research to ensure students receive substantive information about the artist, her motivation, and how her artworks function as a social commentary. The suggested dialogue and activities can be adapted to meet students' skill levels and altered to incorporate skill-building exercises specifically if students are interested in using studio techniques similar to those of Breitz.

Candice Breitz: Context and Interpretation

Candice Breitz (b. 1972, Johannesburg, South Africa) graduated with a degree in fine art from Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and moved to the United States in 1993 where she later earned her masters degree in art history from the University of Chicago. Shortly after, Breitz began to show bodies of work that confronted white South African male perspectives of South African women. Early works such as *Ghost Series*, 1994–96 explored the projection of an idealized race onto the bodies of women by literally whiting-out black South African women against their indigenous settings. Breitz produced this series on appropriated postcards, which function as souvenirs marking travel to exotic foreign lands. Thus, the bodies of these South African women were revealed to be not only a sociopolitical site where the fantasies of male perspectives played-out, but also as a site wrapped-up in global narratives that continue to reinforce colonialist perspectives through the reification of the other.

In the series, *Group Portraits*, 2001 (Figures 1 and 2) Breitz again utilized the technique of whiting-out or erasing signifiers, but this time she effectively removed products from advertising. The result is a number of fragmented floating parts, which provide disturbing visibility into Lacanian psychoanalysis. This body of work explicitly draws attention to what individuals lack (at least from the point of view of a capitalist market) and as a result Breitz crafts a surprising extension of commodity fetishism. Where commodity fetishism is understood as the erasure of the means of production (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001), Breitz asks: what happens when both the means of production and the subsequent cultural filler are erased? Are we, as global marketers would have it, no more than disembodied remnants devoid of meaning? From the perspective of critical pedagogy and art education, this work reminds viewers that while the connectedness of parts to a whole may be tenuous, the space in between allows for transformative growth that can disrupt hegemony.

Breitz established her oeuvre by continually surveying her immediate environment for evidence of self brushing-up against the collective or manufactured identities presented in mass media. Whereas much of her work alludes to market constructed identities, her *Surrogate Portraits*, 1998 (Figure 3) explore the flip side of the equation. Here, Breitz's photographs (taken in a Kmart portrait studio) serve as a vehicle by which a generally unrecognized populace can re-access their identity (Dziewior, 1999).

Figure 1. *Group Portrait #2 (Tommy Hilfiger Double-Spread)*, 2001
(source: http://iheartphotograph.blogspot.com)

Figure 2. *Group Portrait #5 (Mercedes Benz)*, 2001
(source: http://iheartphotograph.blogspot.com)

Surrogates operate as stand-ins for those with like first names and as such reclaim the spectacularization of names such as "Bill" and "Monica." These works investigate the interplay of cultural phenomena and identity construction by questioning the effect of the elevation of specific persons to that of cult status on all others who share a basic and otherwise non-disclosing attribute: a name.

Figure 3. *Surrogate Portrait (Bill+Monica)*, 1998 (source: http://www.tanin.biz)

Continued investigations into media obsessions and the construction of celebrity surface in the bodies of work produced by Breitz in the last decade. Using the familiar language of video, Breitz channeled her own interpretations of cultural icons while pursuing doctoral research on Andy Warhol in the *Babel Series*, 1999 (Sheets, 2009). In an innovative spin on language development, Breitz appropriates snippets of popular music videos and loops them so as to reproduce the monosyllabic muttering of developing children. Where utterances such as "Ma, Pa, Me" are given visibility through the highly glamorized commercially driven images of Madonna, Freddie Mercury, Prince, Sting, Grace Jones, Abba, and George Michael, Breitz, in her words, "alludes to the challenges facing subject formation in a world in which children often learn their first words by watching television or singing along to pop songs" (Hunt, 2000).

The cacophony that results from the reformed history of MTV in *Babel* is pushed further as Breitz captures non-native English speakers performing karaoke in her 2000 series of the same name. As ten people croon to the words of *Killing Me Softly*, the difficulty in which a viewer has in hearing the individual words of the song is whittled back by the recognition that these words are a barrier for self-expression. Whereas any one of the ten participants can be seen operating within the visual language of "star performance" with the gentle tilting of their shoulders, bobbing of their head, or emphatic use of the microphone as they seek to make the song their own, we cannot overlook their tentative use of language and the hesitancy in which their eyes wander across the lower third of the screen in search of the next word. The dissonance between the visual event of pop-stardom and the off-key, asynchronous pop song compels deeper analysis of how popular culture and language operate as defining forces on identity construction. By exploring such fault lines, Breitz not only conveys through her artworks the many external influences that affect one's identity, but also the many avenues within the mass media where one might establish oneself as a meaningful producer of culture.

MTV could not escape Breitz's reach, when in 2003 she produced her *Becoming* series (Figures 4–6). In an interview with Alexandra Wolfe (2004) for the New York Observer, Breitz attributed her inspiration for *Becoming* to the MTV reality series "Becoming" in which young people were selected to become their music idols. In a flurry of a celebrity make-up and costume, teenagers are coached in the choreography of a select music video and perform lip-synching as if they were the icons themselves. A quick search on YouTube (2001) reveals Kristy Cavanaugh becoming Brittany Spears. The celebrity transformation team erased every trace of whoever the sixteen year old happened to be prior to their engagement while the post-production team effectively stripped her of her voice thus leaving only a gesticulating pantomime.

In Breitz's 14 dual channel reconsideration of MTV's "Becoming," Breitz incorporates herself into the work by partnering her image with that of one of seven female stars who draw upon a similar lexicon as they convey the "reality" of their relationships with men. Breitz is seen lip-synching the lines of each actress as she takes on their mannerisms; however, the marked difference in Breitz's portrayal is her stark black and white likeness against a plain background with little to no make-up, thus revealing no effort to take any more from the accompanying actresses than their words and gestures. By decontextualizing these characters, Breitz heightens our awareness of the stereotype to which each actress aspires. When we compare the Meg Ryan or Julia Roberts or Cameron Diaz to Breitz, we hear their voice, their words, but what we see undermines the value of their language—crunched brows, downtrodden glances intended to convey deep internal reflections on the seriousness of the characters' situations culminate in the flailing arms of a woman beside herself, which in *Becoming* is quite literally the case. This doppelganger effect derails the collective construction of "the girlfriend."

Breitz continues to cull from the annals of Hollywood various clichés that when spliced together communicate an archetype. Ideas of femininity and masculinity and how these characteristics inform social relations are revealed in multi-channel video installations such as *Mother + Father*, 2005, *Him*, 1968–2008, and *Her*, 1978–2008. In each of these works, Breitz divorces the characters from their background so we see only the actors/actresses against a shared field of black.

In *Mother + Father* (Figures 7 and 8), the male and female leads become seeming participants in a group conversation about the trials and tribulations of parenthood and the relationship of mothers and fathers to their children. What is striking about this work is the artist's decision to present the mothers as separate from the fathers. For viewers who grew up (or are growing up) in an environment where the kitchen served as the rightful gathering place for the mothers (women) and the living room the lair of the fathers (men), chicken and egg arguments surface: did families do this because popular media portrayed a division in marriage, in parenting?

Figures 4-6. *Becoming*, 2003
(source: http://www.installationart.net)

Or, did these stereotypes arise because a critical mass occurred when the collective behaviors across many appeared so similar? Moreover, am I seeing *every* mother and father? Are these *my* surrogate parents? Reflecting on Breitz's earlier work *Babel* where consideration to subject formation in front of the TV is given, they perhaps are.

Figures 7 and 8. *Mother + Father*, 2005 (source: http://www.artthrob.co.za)

In similar fashion, for the *Him* series, Breitz places repeated images of Jack Nicholson across seven large screens. Nicholson is heard repeating lines from various films in a manner that suggests a dialogue across selves that, as Hilarie Sheets (2009) states in her review of the installation, creates "…a figure of supreme narcissism, with little connection to any reality beyond his own" (p. 91). On another set of seven plasma screens, Meryl Streep is seen across stages of her career engaging several layers of "her" or who "she" is. By collecting the several characterizations together, removing them from their "natural" backgrounds hence providing space for a new discourse, viewers discover not only the "…nondescript cultural landscape that has been mapped for us by Hollywood…" but also the spaces wherein one can inject themselves if one is to make sense of how one fits within these seemingly predetermined social roles (Chambers, 2005, p. 12).

Candice Breitz considers herself a stakeholder in the culture industry by means of her consumption of its mass produced goods and as such feels an entitlement to employ actors as she sees fit, thus she redirects labor toward an economy of her own choosing (Chambers, 2005). Such statements empower others to confront popular culture and its often debilitating stereotypes square in the face, to come to what may appear monolithic with an understanding of the malleability of its content. Art educators can assist students in becoming critical examiners of their environment by opening-up popular culture for investigation while at once providing means for students to reanimate and reconstitute meaning toward new understandings.

Learning Objectives:

Describe, analyze, and interpret popular culture in art

Examine how the appropriation of materials questions originality and authenticity in art

Investigate how images inform identity and activate collective consciousness

Identify opportunities for reconstructing meaning within students' immediate environments

Demonstrate an understanding of Fair Use and effective methods of re-interpreting media so as to ensure Fair Use

Dialogue Topic: Appropriation and Fair Use

Mash-ups, cut-ups, sampling, looping, dubbing, smashups, remixes, etc., all have at least one thing in common—namely, the reuse of existent content. Much of the content included in these often generative practices is copyrighted material. With the artistic re-rendering of media and the continued growth of online outlets for media sharing, issues of Fair Use routinely surface. For art educators who facilitate the discussion and use of popular culture in the studio, recent literature on Fair Use can be informative specifically if students, like Breitz, draw upon their immediate environment to demystify or recodify cultural norms.

Engage students on the topic of appropriation in art and Fair Use:

- What does appropriation mean? What are some examples of appropriation throughout art history?

- How do appropriated images function when incorporated into new artworks? What new understandings emerge?

- In what ways does appropriated imagery in art affect your ideas of originality or authenticity? Who is the author of appropriated art?

- What is copyright? When can copyrighted material be (re)used?

- How do you define "fair use"? How do the courts in the United States define Fair Use?

Students may have varying levels of experience with appropriation in art and the guidelines of Fair Use so ask them to research each topic to the degree that they broaden their existing knowledge. Have students then write a short essay that through the use of example(s) addresses the following:

- Appropriation in art

- How appropriated sign(s) change meaning through reuse/recontextualization

- Why it is important (or not) to reuse already existing imagery in artwork

- Each of the four standards by which Fair Use is determined by the US Courts (students might choose to analyze examples that either meet or fail to meet the guidelines)

- Whether or not they agree with the intent behind copyright and Fair Use

Dialogue Topic: Opening Spaces for Dialogue

Candice Breitz often removes her subjects from their backgrounds. Depending on the particular work, her decontextualizing techniques both isolate and intensify the action of the subject. In so doing, her subjects are free to perform according to Breitz's own script. The act of divorcing subjects from their backgrounds provides space for new meanings to form.

Show students examples of Breitz's *Group Portraits* and various video installations, specifically where she has decontextualized the subject.

- From where is the artist appropriating these images/sounds?

- In what ways does Breitz's work meet (or fail to meet) Fair Use guidelines?

- How is the artist changing the meaning of the original work(s)?

- What happens when these subjects are removed from their environment? What happens when products are removed from advertising? What are marketers selling? What are we buying?

- What new meanings does Breitz introduce or reveal in these works?

- How does mass media affect you? What are some of the stereotypes communicated through mass media? How do you make sense of these stereotypes?

- Are we responsible for the images in mass media? Explain. Do you feel like you can resist cultural norms and establish new ways of participating in society? Describe.

Ask students to research current popular media and collect a wide range of advertisements. Have students select several examples and interpret the messages communicated through the visual/text elements. Using the same examples, ask students to photocopy or otherwise document the original and to then cut elements from the background. Students might remove products, people, logos, objects, etc., and interpret these elements apart from their original context. Students can adhere the original to one side of a presentation board and the decontextualized element(s) to the back and lead the class in a discussion where many more understandings of the technique and the decontextualized element(s) might surface.

Dialogue Topic: Inter-media

Artists using collage, montage, and assemblage throughout the twentieth century to present times have contributed significantly to diverse understandings of mass produced culture. As is evident in the work of Candice Breitz, artists using these media not only problematize cultural norms, but also disrupt the relationship between viewed/viewer by operating between them, directly at the '/' which marks the contested boundary between self as object and self as subject. Artists producing meaning in this liminal and discursive space are actively engaged in dissociating cultural signifiers from their source and reanimating them with new meaning through thoughtful juxtapositions. Garoian and Gaudelius (2004) argue that inter-media studio practices increase awareness and instill discerning skills that empower students to examine, expose, and critique their environment so as to not only find the spaces wherein transformative activity can occur, but also to inhabit those spaces as producers of culture.

Assess student understanding of inter-media techniques through dialogue. (Students may have already uncovered a great deal of information leading to this topic in earlier discussions and activities.)

- Drawing upon your experience and research, describe what collage, montage, and assemblage mean. From where do artists practicing these media access their ideas/materials?

- How can practicing these media become a metaphor for disrupting cultural norms?

- What ideas and concepts are explored by the artists you found who use or reference popular culture in their works? In what ways are cultural norms being questioned or revealed or reinterpreted in these works?

- What components of collective or mass-produced culture do you question or want to know more about? Why?

Ask students to research further or begin research against the topics around which they want to extend their knowledge and experience. Have students experiment with a variety of inter-media techniques and keep these experiments together with their research in a visual process journal. Encourage students to break from research and experimentation from time to time to share their findings with each other. Through research, experiment, and class discussions, students can finalize their ideas and determine a method of production that best fits their concept then proceed with the creation of a culminating studio project.

Conclusion and Assessment

Teachers can assess students according to their participation in discussions, their willingness to critique popular culture and its presence in the art world through writings; and their internalization of contemporary concepts in art through preliminary and culminating studio projects.

Artists have engaged popular culture to varying degrees throughout art history as a means to critique and influence codified cultural practices. Art educators are poised for this intervention as we operate, like our students, at the interface of convention and innovation as we seek to redefine normative educational practices with ones that displace the voice of authority thereby creating the space necessary for students to construct new meanings.

Resources: http://www.candicebreitz.net; http://www.centerforsocialmedia.org/resources/fair_use
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Acting the Part

In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright introduce the concept of "commodity signs," (p. 206) which, simply translated, alludes to the ideas and associations we buy when we purchase a product. Investigating the construction of self through the purchase or acquisition of commodities complicates conventional understandings of the perhaps cliché, but persistent phrase "teenage identity crisis."

When I revisit my early teenage memories, I recall the terror of being the only one wearing home sewn clothing in a room full of chatty girls wearing the latest in mall fashions. I could not overlook the fact that I did not belong and I felt somewhat empty. Without the funds necessary to purchase my own mall-wardrobe, I reconciled my place in the world by aligning myself with an alternative crowd where clothing, if not a hand creation, certainly had previous owners… only then, my night terrors were regarding the eclectic and sometimes-punkish appearance of my friends—did I have *the right* (i.e., their) *attitude*? I recall thinking at one point that my identity had everything to do with my shoes: if I change shoes, then I must also change character. I don't think I was alone in this and I continue to see the merit of such thinking (think about your mind set when dressing for a hike versus a night out on the town) today. However, questions surface from time to time: Do we define the "character" we become or do we become a "manufactured identity"? How much of our identity is mediated by commercial imagery, by our friends? Does it matter?

Recommended for Grades 10–16

These questions mark the gateway for exploring commodity signs and investigating the personal investments we deposit into articles of clothing or modes of being. Such investigations spur additional questions: do we have the capacity to formulate a self that is independent of and resistant to the world around us? More importantly, *should* we? Daiello, Hathaway, Rhoades, and Walker (2006) discuss resistance through a Lacanian informed pedagogy, which frames the desire for commodities as a "false consciousness constituted by a subject's lack…originating in, and perpetuated by, the *objet a*. The *objet a* is the crux of identity… [it] is fluid and changeable, fluctuating in meaning and importance throughout one's lifetime" (p. 315). Such a pedagogy views identity "as a function of a *subjective* position" (Daiello et al., 2006, p. 310) where external forces, internal conflicts, and deep seeded desire shape one's sense of self. Through this lens, one's interior life inextricably links to the external. Such a pedagogical approach in the art classroom can cultivate meaningful discussions, which provide a great deal of flexibility for exploring one's self within the context of a multiplicity of actual or unrealized subject positions.

(non-autobiographical) Self-portraiture

A quick review of education resources reveals a staggering amount of lesson plans involving self-portraiture. The common characteristic across the many states that students should focus internally on themselves, to identify their traits and characteristics, obvious or hidden, that when expressed through a given medium convey a sense of who they are. Whereas these lessons are invaluable in terms of providing a safe place to address the many interior facets of self, few appear to take the leap from mere representation to the cultural significance of how these constructions of self function in context of our image laden world. Moreover, views of self outside of the context of the world suggest that students are autonomous figures free from material trappings and with fixed identities.

As an alternative identity exploration device, one that provides for internal reflection and outward discovery, non-autobiographical self-portraits provide a means for students to investigate several facets of themselves and others by exploring constructed worlds that question cultural codes. In her article, *Tangential visibility: Becoming self through creating sociocultural portraits*, Kathryn Grushka (2008) argues for art educators to shift away from traditional introverted self-portraiture toward a portraiture that "situates students as critical observers and social commentators, and is a position from which they can explore the spaces between individual and collective social subjectivities" (p. 298). By adapting what Grushka (2008) refers to as "tangential visibility," educators can provide a means for students to move beyond the personal—to investigate, with a critical eye, the collective identities of others, which can strengthen students' abilities to view themselves as well as others from a multiplicity of perspectives.

Artists such as Cindy Sherman, Nikki S. Lee, and Yasumasa Morimura each modify/enhance their appearance as well as adapt their body language in order to become, or more accurately *construct*, someone else. Their artworks serve as compelling vehicles for discourse centering on the use of imagery to manipulate realities in a manner that suggests the shifting of one's subjectivity in relation to (constructed) contexts not unlike what we experience daily. These works convey how identity is an ever-evolving facet of life occurring at the interstices of self and other as opposed to a self-involved rite of passage or "crisis."

Learning Objectives

⊗ Explore the work of several artists who use non-autobiographical self-portraiture as a vehicle to explore social roles

⊗ Investigate how image, symbol, and composition construct identity

⊗ Examine how the appropriation of identities functions socio-culturally

⊗ Demonstrate the complexities of identity construction through non-autobiographical self-portraiture

Dialogue Topics + Activities

Cindy Sherman: Who Makes Whom?

Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, 1977–1980 set a precedent for non-autobiographical self-portrait photography. In this celebrated body of work, Sherman effortlessly dons the likeness of several female characters and positions each into situations that convey a sense of intrigue (Figures 1–3). The presence of 'Film Stills' in the title of Sherman's work alludes to a convention in Hollywood where, to borrow Arthur Danto's words cited in *Cindy Sherman Retrospective*, scenes are "reenacted" (p. 4) for the purposes of marketing hence the topic of character construction beneath the spectacle of mass media often surfaces in relation to Sherman's work.

Many of Sherman's *Film Stills* document a character looking out of frame thus implying the existence of another. This "look" together with the photographic frame within the context of cinema and performance become the foundation for exploring the palpability of Sherman's characters. Initiate this discovery process for students by engaging in a dialogue that reveals the non-autobiographical self-portrait as a device through which alternate selves come into being via changes in costume, backdrop, and photographic techniques that together simulate a confrontation between self and other.

Figure 2. *Untitled Film Still #12*, 1978
(source: *The Complete* Untitled Film Stills *Cindy Sherman*, p. 97)

Figure 3. *Untitled Film Still #84*, 1980
(source: *The Complete* Untitled Film Stills *Cindy Sherman*, p. 117)

Using Figures 1–3:

- Have you seen images like these before? Where? What was the context?

- How are these images alike?

- Who are these women? What visual clues provide insight into who they are?

- Why are these women behaving in these ways? For whom are the women "performing"?

- In what other ways do women, or people more generally, behave in similar situations? Where did we learn this? Can we unlearn behaviors?

- What is Sherman changing in these images when she changes character? How does the change in context affect how we interpret these images? How does context affect the way you "perform"?

- How do the formal qualities of photography affect the way these works are read? Are these images as effective today as when Sherman first created them? Why/not?

> *Activity*: Sherman, photographing only herself, explored multiple characters through the use of make-up, clothing, and the constant rearranging of her New York loft in a manner that allowed her to locate particular vignettes (Frankel, 2003). Have students explore their homes and produce a photographic series of non-autobiographical self-portraits that suggest different characterizations. For this activity, students should focus on their personal belongings and spaces to draw out creative and unexpected uses of the articles and backdrops that fill their everyday lives. Encourage students to act as their own production designer, wardrobe supervisor, actor, photographer, etc., to build an understanding of constructing environments that communicate ideas about one's place in the world.
>
> Ask students to compile their series of images in an art journal. Communicate to students that their journal can serve as a collection point for their thoughts and ideas as they progress through the remaining exercises. Student initiated writings, internet search terms, sketches, and any number of other visual materials collected will mark the students path of discovery as their research takes them in multiple, even contradictory, directions. This document can also serve as a springboard for later ideas while at once becoming a compelling art object in its own right.

As a follow-up, discuss the students' experiences and the varied responses students may have toward one another's work. To further an overall critique of the collective body of work, ask:

- What "characters" do you see in your work that you recognize? How/why?

- In what ways do the things pictured communicate ideas about who the person is?

- Is the person pictured related to who you are or like other people you know? In what ways?

- Were you surprised that your everyday artifacts could be construed in such a variety of ways? Explain. How does this affect how you relate to these things now?

- Prior to this exercise, how have you modified your appearance and behavior to fit a given context? How do you feel about this chameleon-like behavior?

- Do you think exploring alternative roles connects you to others who may be very similar to the "type" you sometimes play? Describe.

Nikki S. Lee: Who Aren't I?

The Korean born artist Nikki S. Lee, like Cindy Sherman before her, documents herself *en scène* albeit under quite different circumstances. Where Sherman's singular presence with ambiguous glances to the side begs the question, "Who do you want me to be?"—Lee's overtly confident gaze directly into the lens states: "I am exactly who I look like."

In Lee's *Projects* (1997–2001), a ubiquitous snapshot aesthetic (similar to what we might observe in our own family albums) seems to legitimize her *belonging* to a variety of subcultures—all of which, for weeks to months in advance of asking to be photographed, Lee researches, inserts herself, and, to an extent, assimilates (Martin, 2001). Lee's assimilation into these subcultures is evidenced by Lee's choice of the "appropriate" subculture clothing and mannerisms, which function as a sort of camouflage that suggests, on the surface at least, Lee's intimate connection and complete integration into the cultural milieu of a given subculture.

Projects documents more than ten subcultures. Only after viewing several images from across a variety of subcultures does Lee's repeated likeness throughout the greater project become apparent. This suggests that socially inscribed classifications are much more permeable than we might think (Martin, 2001). Within the context of a discussion considering the merits of an evolving identity that routinely investigates its connections to, or dependencies on, external influences, Lee's work is most fitting.

As an artist who is more performer than photographer, Lee seems to operate at the very intersection of self and other by not only exploring cultural signatures in the form of clothing and make-up, but also exploring mannerisms that when understood as empathic responses to those closest at hand elicit a desire from within the viewer to believe that Lee is in fact a legitimate member of the several sociocultural groups captured across the series. However, the realization that one could be anybody or everybody at once as opposed to a discrete individual destabilizes conventional understandings of what it means to "find oneself."

Figure 4. *Punk Project (6)*, 1997
(source: *Nikki S. Lee Projects*, p. 23)

Figure 5. *Skateboarders Project (29)*, 2000
(source: *Nikki S. Lee Projects*, p. 74)

Figure 6. *Swingers Project (4)*, 1998–89
(source: *Nikki S. Lee Projects*, p. 53)

Facilitate a sharing of ideas and follow-up by introducing an example from several of Lee's *Projects* (Figures 4–6).

- What signs communicate Lee is (or is not) a part of the group photographed?

- When you meet new people, change schools or move, how do you identify the people with whom you want to be friends? How do you become a part of the group?

- In what ways do your adventures into and out of subcultures affect your identity?

- Can you think of a time when it would be and when it would not be appropriate to assume the identity of another? Explain.

- How is Lee's photographic style contributing to her concept? When do you see photography similar to this? Describe. How is this different from Sherman's photographic technique?

Writing Activity: Building upon the discussion of the previous activity, have students write reflectively in their art journals on how the use of specific clothing, poses, or environments communicate ideas about who people are. Ask students to then review current media for examples where several "types" of people are pictured (e.g., sports, music, and fashion magazines across geographic cultures). To summarize their findings, students can write a short essay sharing their perspective on the in/decisiveness of commodity signs to establish identity where they can then draw conclusions on the perhaps eludent "self."

Activity: Students can work collaboratively or independently to create a series of images, art works, or writings documenting their exploration into other subcultures (emo, punk, skater, musicians, theater, vegan, BMX, etc.). The intent is not to recreate Lee's work or put students into a position where they seek to emulate another subculture, but to document (in an anthropological manner) themselves out in their community interacting with others. Should the idea of anthropological field research be too overwhelming, students can also initiate research into other subcultures via the Internet.

Encourage students to challenge themselves by investigating subcultures wherein they have little experience. Students should take note of their experience in their art journals and provide photographic evidence (or other art making or bibliographic evidence) of involvement with the group(s) of their choice as they begin to learn the traditions within a given subculture. Students may begin to identify stereotypes that force them to analyze their own biases; using their journals as reflective writing tools, students can begin to reconcile these contradictions.

Yasumasa Morimura: Who I Am Not.

Disclaimer: Yasumasa Morimura's body of work, while a significant example of using one's self in one's art, may be suitable for only mature viewers. Morimura's work is provocative and perhaps so troubling that students cannot easily begin to explore how his work operates within the context of tangential visibility. Issues of gender identification may arise as a result of viewing Morimura's work, which for some student bodies will inspire a discussion that is welcomed. Yet, other students may not be prepared for the cascading issues and questions that such discussions reveal. Instructors are invited to independently research this artist prior to introducing students to his work. Secondary educators might consider parental involvement in the decision prior to bringing this artist into the classroom.

Japanese artist Yasumasa Morimura inserts himself directly into the interstitial spaces amid male/female, East/West, and painting/photography. His techniques, like Sherman and Lee's, include transforming himself through costumery and context to constitute or locate the other. However, Morimura seems to take the exercise to its logical conclusion by presenting portraits of himself where he almost is, but most definitely is not, who he portrays. Joonsung Yoon (2002) describes Morimura's practice of becoming the other as a way of visualizing his absence. By using photographic technologies (among other things) to transport himself into character, Morimura is able to materialize himself at a distance so that he has (we, as viewers, have) no choice but to see who he is not.

Figure 7. *Daughter of Art History (Theater A)*, 1990
(source: *Daughter of Art History. Photographs by Yasumasa Morimura*, p. 83)

Figure 8. *An Inner Dialogue with Frida Kahlo (Collar of Thorns)*, 2001 (source: *Daughter of Art History. Photographs by Yasumasa Morimura*, p. 97)

Figure 9. *Self-Portrait (Actress) / White Marilyn*, 1996 (source: http://www.brooklynmuseum.org)
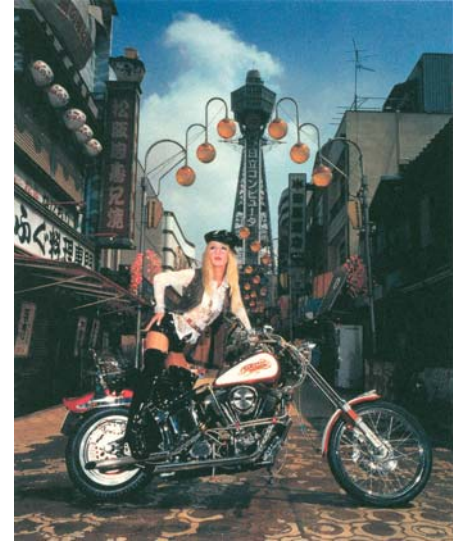

Figure 10. *Self-portrait (Actress, after Brigitte Bardot 2)*, 1996 (source: *Daughter of Art History. Photographs by Yasumasa Morimura*, p. 114)

Morimura's exploration of female as a male suggests the tradition of *onnagata* where male actors play female roles in Japanese *Kabuki* theater. While this is not the only facet of gender exploration to be considered, such a connection establishes the persistence of Morimura's maleness and Eastern perspective throughout his work. Connotatively, Morimura's play between male and female, East and West becomes a metaphor for exploring self and other specifically through the lens of constructed perspectives on "who" a man or woman or the East or West is or should be. Such tangential explorations relocate Morimura across time and place and as such they can serve as the basis of discourse in art education classrooms investigating identity as it evolves over time through myriad social roles and cultural constructs.

Ask students to scrutinize Figures 7–10.

- What do you know about the original artists and icons presented? How has the presence of Morimura changed your understanding of the artist/work/icon?

- How has Morimura's interpretation changed the way in which these works/icons function today?

- What traces of Morimura remain in these images? Why does he want us to see these? In what ways is Morimura connected (or not) to everything we see? Describe.

- Do you think, like Lee, Morimura is exploring facets of himself? Why/not?

- Of what benefit to Morimura or his viewer is it to see explorations across time, between male/female and East/West?

- How do his reinterpretations of art historical works comment on the history of painting and photography?

Activity: In much of Morimura's work, he can be found gazing directly at the viewer from among the artifacts of art historical figures like Edouard Manet or Frida Kahlo or the pop-culture signifiers for glamour and sex appeal. As viewers meeting this gaze, we are challenged to reconcile what we see with what we know (or what we think we know) about Morimura, history, culture, and ourselves.

In preparation for a studio component, have students research a prominent art historical figure or popular icon and gather several images for which the students provide a visual inventory as well as interpretations that consider not only what is seen, but also the history and cultural concerns within which the chosen works/icons were created/celebrated. Ask students to collect their research in their art journals and to write a short reflection on how they relate or not to the art/artist or icon/actor as well as the conditions under which the art/icon was created and is conventionally understood.

Have students create non-autobiographical self-portraits that convey their research. Following Morimura's lead, students might digitally insert their own eyes and nose onto an image of a popular actor as a means to disrupt our collective acceptance of the actor as a cultural icon. At the same time, students may be challenged to reconcile how the resulting image situates the student him/herself as part of our shared material culture. Likewise, students might rewrite art history while at the same time actively participating in the history of art as a producer of culture.

Conclusion + Assessment

Drawing upon cultural artifice to contextualize notions of self reveals a rather complicitous relationship between self and other. Investigations such as those suggested in this instructional resource invite students to use traditional and contemporary art methods to create realities that allow the students to explore social relationships and act out a multiplicity of subject positions, which can facilitate a connection with the other. In this manner, non-autobiographical self-portraits can aid students' understandings of the myriad roles they play as well as generate additional interest in exploring the relationship between oneself and the diverse external world in which one operates daily.

Instructors can assess student engagement with the activities shared here through participation in class discussions, art journal writings, student-initiated research, and their willingness and ability to create works of art that express an understanding of the concepts as they are applicable to the development of the student.

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advancing
democracy

Critical pedagogy situates participants in a self-critical learning environment that questions dominant ideologies; that seeks to reconfigure both the learner and the culture within which learners operate to advance democracy. Darts (2004) argues that critical pedagogues committed to social justice must attend to the networking of politics and culture; that because of the relationship between the cultural and the aesthetic, art educators are well-placed to focus attention on an ideologically driven aesthetic that we must be attuned to if we are to advocate democratic principles.

Artist Krzysztof Wodiczko (pronounced krish-tof wo-dich-ko) draws attention to and subsequently overcomes impediments that exist quietly and obscurely within our communities. Wodiczko provides people, specifically those on the margins of society such as the homeless, emigrants, or those who have suffered trauma in their lives, with "tools" that can assist them in their day-to-day interactions and even propel them into the discourse of the city. These instruments become, in turn, tools for social change.

Recommended for Grades 9–16

Wodiczko's work activates people and spaces in a manner that reminds communities that urban spaces are *our spaces*; that *making use* of these spaces can contribute significantly toward the ideal of a democratic society. Embedded within Wodiczko's works are notions of power, oppression, struggle, survival, and transformation.

about the artist

Krzysztof Wodiczko was born during World War II (1943) in Warsaw, Poland. He received his MFA in architecture and industrial design from the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw in 1968 where he "…was trained to be a member of [an] elite unit of designers, skillful infiltrators who were supposed to transform existing state socialism into an intelligent, complex, and human design project" (Crimp, Deutsche, Lajer-Burcharth, Wodiczko, 1986, p. 33). After teaching engagements in Poland and Canada, Wodiczko is now a Professor of Visual Arts at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts where he leads the Interrogative Design Group, which, like it sounds, *investigates* culture with the purpose of transforming (human) conditions. Throughout his teaching career, Wodiczko has produced a series of nomadic instruments as part of a

Figure 1. Krzysztof Wodiczko holding *Alien Staff*
(source: http://stuff.mit.edu)

project titled *Xenology* as well as over 70 "projections." As an internationally renowned artist, Wodiczko has had major retrospectives of his work in both the United States and Europe.
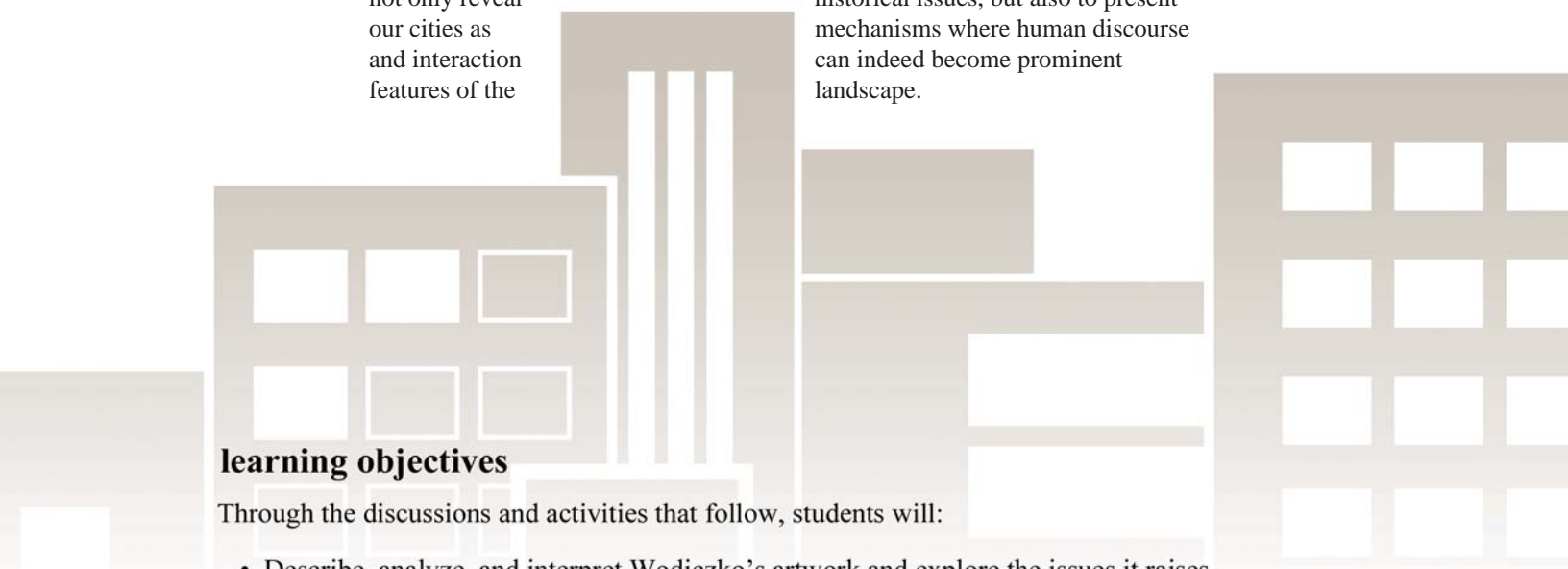
Having been born in the midst of the Warsaw Ghetto[1] uprising, Wodiczko's earliest moments in life were likely infused with a sense for survival—a sense for recognizing the importance of acting out against dominant forces, which in the case of Wodiczko, meant also acting out against the most inhumane conditions so that peace might be had. While Wodiczko does not advocate reserving the most "risky and ambitious" art for those who have witnessed the horror of war, he recognizes that his survival of one of the greatest uprisings against Nazi Germany provides him with a somewhat qualified understanding of what other survivors have gone through (Sollins, 2005).

Such empathy informs a number of devices constructed by Wodiczko specifically for emigrants—items such as the *Alien Staff*, 1992 (Figure 1), which in use at a distance appears as an awkwardly formed walking stick that might

inspire romantic visions of a path well-heeled and full of stories. On closer examination, one sees in the tiny video monitor and hears through the small speakers the "xenologist"[2] who is one and the same as the one using the device (Wright, 1992). Contraptions like *Alien Staff* are the result of collaborations between the artist and the communities in which such items will be used. These collaborations, which invite the often unheard to share their stories, assist with language barriers and pose questions to those in the surrounding community regarding the significance of cultural diversity and the place of the emigrant or refugee in the political sphere.

The defining feature across Wodiczko's work in the last two decades is its public presence. For Wodiczko, "public space is where we often explore or enact democracy" (Phillips, 2003, p. 33), where artists interrupt conventions by bringing to our experience new meanings. As Wodiczko's interview with Phillips (2003) continues, he refers to theories of democracy where those involved are "constructively adversarial" (p. 34) thus establishing a mode of sociopolitical behavior that provides for healthy friction among diverse participants.

In further explorations of public space and public interactions, Wodiczko critically engages not only communities, but also the architecture marking the history of the place and its descendents. Beginning with slide projections in Canada during the 1980s, Wodiczko appropriated buildings as backdrops to static images. By 1996, he added motion and sound as he continued to partner with communities to bring their private, hidden, or overlooked stories to the surface where, when contrasted against mainstream belief or opinion, constructive discussions regarding shared histories, including inequities, could begin. While Wodiczko projects onto architectural surfaces as if they were screens, the architectural sites also function as a piece of the overall work—they connect Wodiczko's projected images to a place across time, which, in turn, emphasizes the permanence of the very issues addressed in Wodiczko's work. These projections interfere with highly organized structures—both the physical structures of a city as well as the social structures among its inhabitants—to not only reveal historical issues, but also to present our cities as mechanisms where human discourse and interaction can indeed become prominent features of the landscape.

learning objectives

Through the discussions and activities that follow, students will:

- Describe, analyze, and interpret Wodiczko's artwork and explore the issues it raises
- Investigate and identify issues in their communities
- Demonstrate how art can confront social issues
- Examine the significance, influence, and consequence of socially engaging art in their communities

Wodiczko's work: context and meaning

The Grand Army Plaza Projection, Brooklyn, New York, 1983
Aegis: Equipment for a City of Strangers, 1999–2000
The Tijuana Projection, Centro Cultural de Tijuana, Mexico, 2001
The St. Louis Projection, St. Louis, Missouri, 2004

Wodiczko, a twice over emigrant (once from Poland to Canada and again from Canada to the US), expresses concern with too often heard questions such as, "Where are you from?" "Why are you here?"—Questions that awaken a sense of injustice insofar as the implication "You are not from here; you and I are different…" underscores the communication. Thus, he designed *Aegis: Equipment for a City of Strangers*, 1999–2000 (Figure 2). *Aegis* is equipped with video monitors and sound devices that store pre-recorded images and messages from the wearer of the device. The intent with such an implement is to draw attention to the stranger while at once providing a means for the stranger to interact and communicate with others. The *Aegis* monitors, folding out from the back of the wearer, heightens the extra-terrestrial experience thereby elevating the role of the stranger in a given community. As with much of Wodiczko's work, the device is meant to be provocative and public. In this manner, *Aegis* restructures urban spaces as sites for inquiry. When strangers are no longer overlooked, but instead receive due attention, their voices are heard and from this experience critical discussions that concern the space we all share can commence.

Making the stranger prominent raises important issues with regards to how political alliances thus social relationships within our city structures arise. Wodiczko interrupts daily activity by calling into question the stability of a political sphere founded on the misconceptions around or the outright ignoring of multiple voices. By giving the stranger a voice (a means to provide testimony) and utilizing public space, Wodiczko "…hold[s] the state, the mainstream media, and even global financial structures ethically and politically accountable" to all (Phillips, 2003, p. 34).
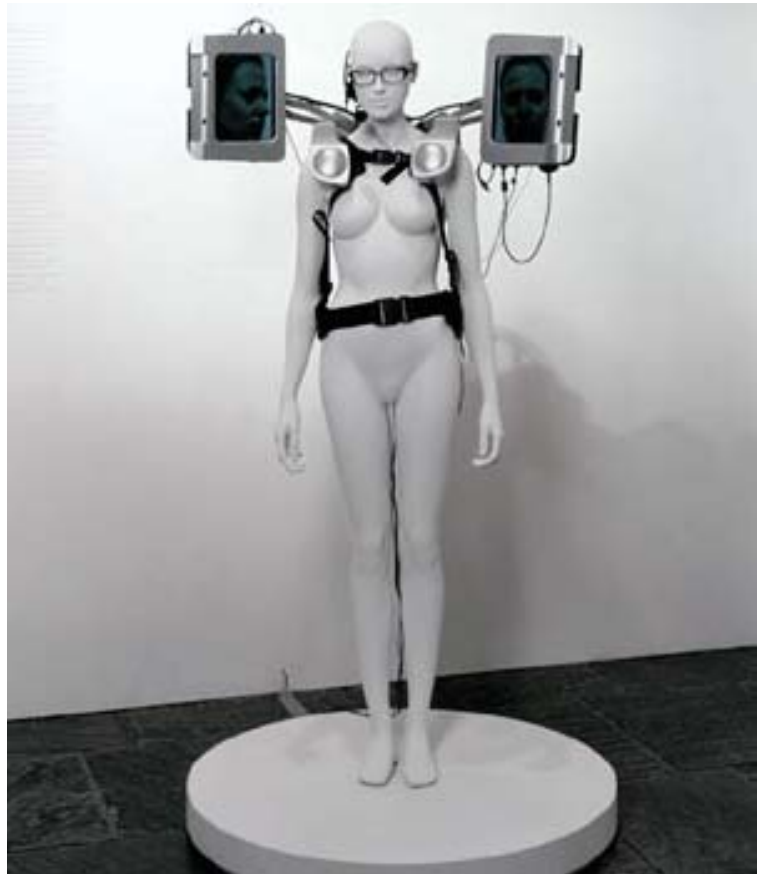

Figure 2. *Aegis: Equipment for a City of Strangers*, 1999–2000. Installation at the Whitney Biennial. (source: http://beta.asoundstrategy.com)

Other artistic strategies employed by Wodiczko include the use of large-scale projections that consequently provide equal voice to the city. In projections such as *The Tijuana Projection*, 2001 (Figure 3), the Tijuana Cultural Center, which at the time dedicated itself to diverse use toward an integrated cultural policy, reinforced its mission statement when young women working in local factories shared stories of rape and incest (Sollins, 2005). Wodiczko projected the faces of many of these women as they were telling their stories (heard over a sound system) onto the Tijuana Cultural Center's most significant feature: a sphere. In projects of this scale, Wodiczko collaborates with people living in a community to learn the stories that are told only in the margins and are likely to never be widely heard if not for his interventions.

Just as *Aegis* equipped strangers with a "tool" to communicate, Wodiczko designed a special recording device for his work in Tijuana that fit over the heads of the factory workers with just enough space between their faces and the camera lens to allow for the participants' faces to fully illuminate the cultural center's sphere. Here, Wodiczko's care to fully encompass the building with the live image suggests a need to bring the full weight of the center to life. Through the animated effect of the women's faces, the integrity on which the center's mission was formulated emphasizes the gravity of the women's stories. Here, the city aligns itself with its survivors.
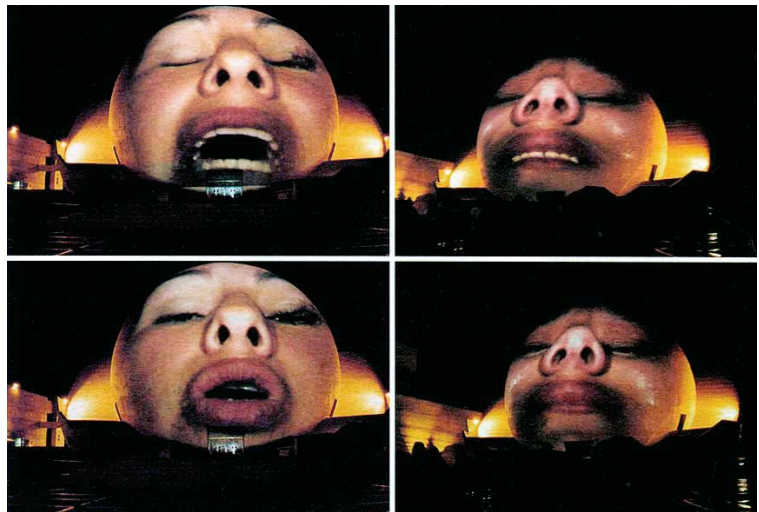
Figure 3. *The Tijuana Projection*, Centro Cultural de Tijuana, Mexico, 2001 (source: http://www.pbs.org)

Figure 4. *The Grand Army Plaza Projection*, Brooklyn, New York, 1983 (source: http://imagearts.ryerson.ca)

For other works such as *The Grand Army Plaza Projection*, 1983 (Figure 4), Wodiczko, equipped with xenon arc slide projectors, married images of US and Soviet missiles onto the north face of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Arch. Here, global narratives unfold and provide reason for viewers to openly discuss not only the literal or surface meaning of these two icons in the midst of the Cold War, but how the images integrate with a century old memorial. Additionally, because the projection took place over the New Year, in a city center brimming with people and traffic while fireworks lit up the sky, myriad meanings come to life and subsequently serve to enliven the crowd with conversation regarding the artist's intent.

Wodiczko, revived the memorial via the use of contemporary political discourse while at once revealing the intra-politics of the arch itself; namely, making explicit that the arch signifies through numerous sculptures on the south side that northern troops promised salvation, yet sculptures are conspicuously absent from the north face. In Wodiczko's words, "The monument has absolutely nothing to say about the North, because if it did, it would have to reflect on itself" (Crimp et al., 1986, p. 25). Thus, Wodiczko's art provides the means by which age-old truths are uncovered and rediscovered in a public forum rich with discourse concerned with both founding principles and future prospects.

Using public space for artworks that question a community's social structures reminds its citizenry that critical dialogue and constructive conversation can build a collaborative pathway toward the advancement of the very values they desire. Not all critical analyses are as easily had in a public forum, specifically if the subject matter reveals histories in a manner that opposes dominant values, select understandings of said history, or idealized visions of what a community should be. A case in point is *The St. Louis Projection*, 2004 (Figure 5), which Wodiczko had originally planned for the city's historic courthouse where the slave Dred Scott first sued for his freedom in 1846.

In St. Louis, Wodiczko again looked to collaborate with people in the community. Here, participants who suffered loss due to violent crime as well as inmates serving time for murder were heard. Their hands were projected to 20x their size and seen gesturing toward the north of the city (a crime center) then toward the downtown municipal buildings where crimes were punished as stories of violence unfolded (Allen, 2004). When the Chief of Museum Services understood the project in full, the courthouse (a part of a national park in downtown St. Louis) withdrew its consent forcing the projection to choose another location…the reason for the change? The project no longer appeared connected to history (Allen, 2004).

Wodiczko, who views people willing to share their stories publicly as monuments in themselves, found inscribed on the new location (a public library) the following: "Recorded thought is our chief heritage from the past, the most lasting legacy we can leave to the future" (Otten, 2004). Whereas the violence in the city and the dialogic interweaving of both sides of the story did not speak strongly enough to claim part of St. Louis's (cultivated?) history, the *public* library underscored the value of the work's *presentness* by providing a means for the stories to be recorded (into history) and at once heard by the public.
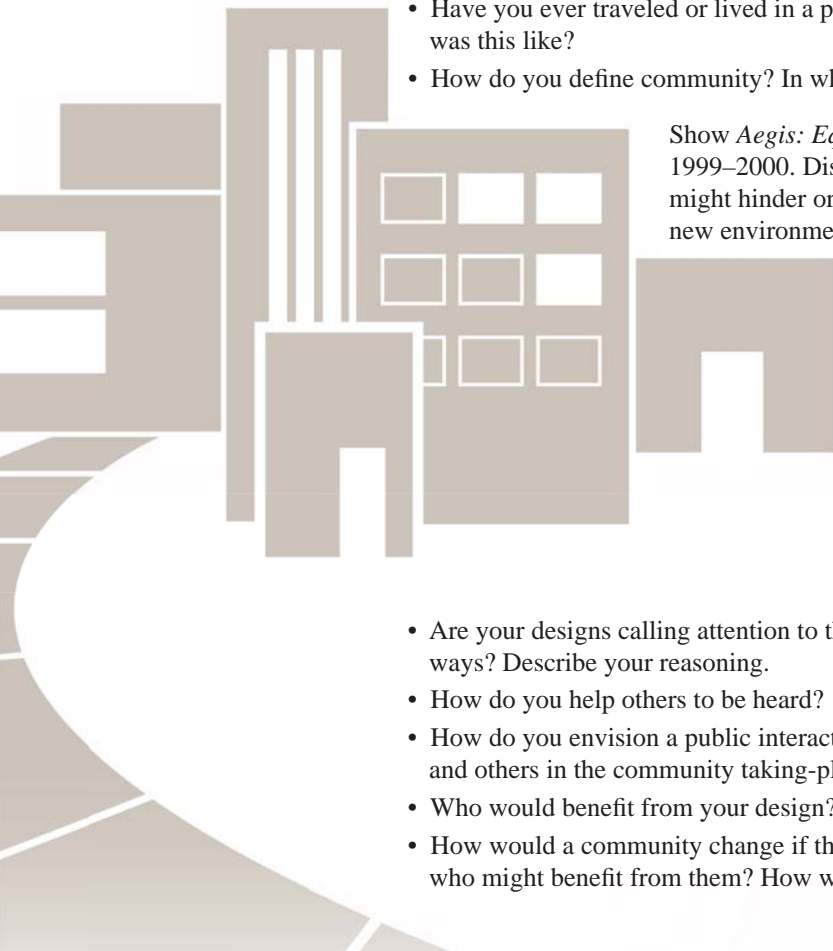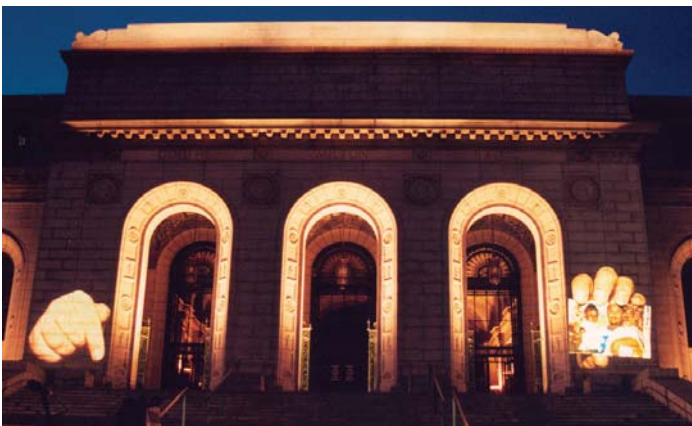

Figure 5. *The St. Louis Projection*, St. Louis, Missouri, 2004
(source: http://visualarts.mit.edu)

instructional activities

To get students thinking about the role of an individual in a community, engage students in an introductory discussion centered on their own lives.

- How do you know when or if you "fit-in"?
- How do you feel when you suspect you are out-of-place?
- What do you do when you see someone "new"?
- Have you ever traveled or lived in a place where you were "new"? What was this like?
- How do you define community? In what communities do you participate?

Show *Aegis: Equipment for a City of Strangers*, 1999–2000. Discuss with students how this device might hinder or help a stranger find their place in a new environment.

activity

Have students design other devices that might help orient strangers to a new city or provide a voice for people who may otherwise go unheard. Engage the class in a group discussion.

- Are your designs calling attention to the person using your device? In what ways? Describe your reasoning.
- How do you help others to be heard?
- How do you envision a public interaction between the user of your design and others in the community taking-place?
- Who would benefit from your design?
- How would a community change if these designs were available to those who might benefit from them? How would others benefit?

Review Wodiczko's projections and discuss how they each function as part of the cultural landscape.

- In what ways do the projections differ from one another? How are they similar?
- How would the projections change or stay the same if the architectural elements changed?
- How does this work affect the environment in which it is placed? In what ways do you imagine the surrounding community reacting?
- What does living in a democracy mean to you? Do these artworks effectively advance democratic ideals? Why/not?
- With what injustices do these works deal?
- What words best describe the motive or intent behind Wodiczko's works? Do you agree with his motivation? Why/not?
- Where in our community might we stage a projection? What function would the work serve? How would we determine whose stories we would tell?

writing and research activity

Ask students to reflect on their lives and the state of affairs of their community (the city, the school, a neighborhood or family) then prepare a written assessment of how their community might change if alternative narratives were told. Encourage students to research various components of their community in an effort to uncover past or present stories that compliment and/or challenge their own ideas. For example, students might review the national or local news for instances where only one side of a story is provided then research alternative view points and reflect on how a multiplicity of perspectives can advance understanding and perhaps result in a change. Or, for students critically surveying their immediate environment (schools, home, social groups), they might identify misconceptions (e.g., kids with dyed hair are "bad") or hidden facets of commonly held beliefs (e.g., only the eccentric and insane become great artists) and investigate how to publicize these topics in a manner that facilitates critical dialogue.

studio activity

Leveraging their research, ask students to organize a public forum (in their classroom or elsewhere in the school or community) where the issues they uncovered can be discussed publicly. Equip students with recording devices (image and/or sound) and have them record the event.

Students can work collaboratively to create a projection or audio experience of their own. Encourage students to work with the school administration or other state institutions to find a venue where they can publicize their stories.

Follow-up with a reflection exercise where students delve deeper into the planning process for large-scale public works, scrutinize the viewers reaction to their work, the context in which it was shown as well as the content, and how artists and artworks function within society.

assessment and conclusion

The proposed discussions and activities introduce students to several facets of Wodiczko's work wherein instructors can assess the engagement level of their students with ideas of power, oppression, diversity, voice and democracy.

Written work serves as an outlet for the internalization and extrapolation of these ideas as they apply to the lives of the students. And, the studio activity aligns students with the personae of a socially engaged artist who through art seeks to advance the conversation by including those who might go unnoticed or those who may suffer beneath the dominant political sphere.

end notes

[1] The Warsaw Ghetto is estimated to be the largest of the ghettos (a confined geographic area) established by Germany during their occupation. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising refers to one of the most significant Jewish resistances against Nazi Germany occurring in 1943 when the remaining ghetto populations were prepped for transport to Treblinka extermination camp.

[2] *xen-* is rooted in Greek and refers to a guest, stranger, or foreigner, or to describe the foreign or strange and is used as a prefix in various scientific terms. The Oxford English Dictionary further defines xenology as the scientific study of extraterrestrial phenomena. Xenologist suggests a visitor, one who is actively engaged in the discovery and exploration of new frontiers.

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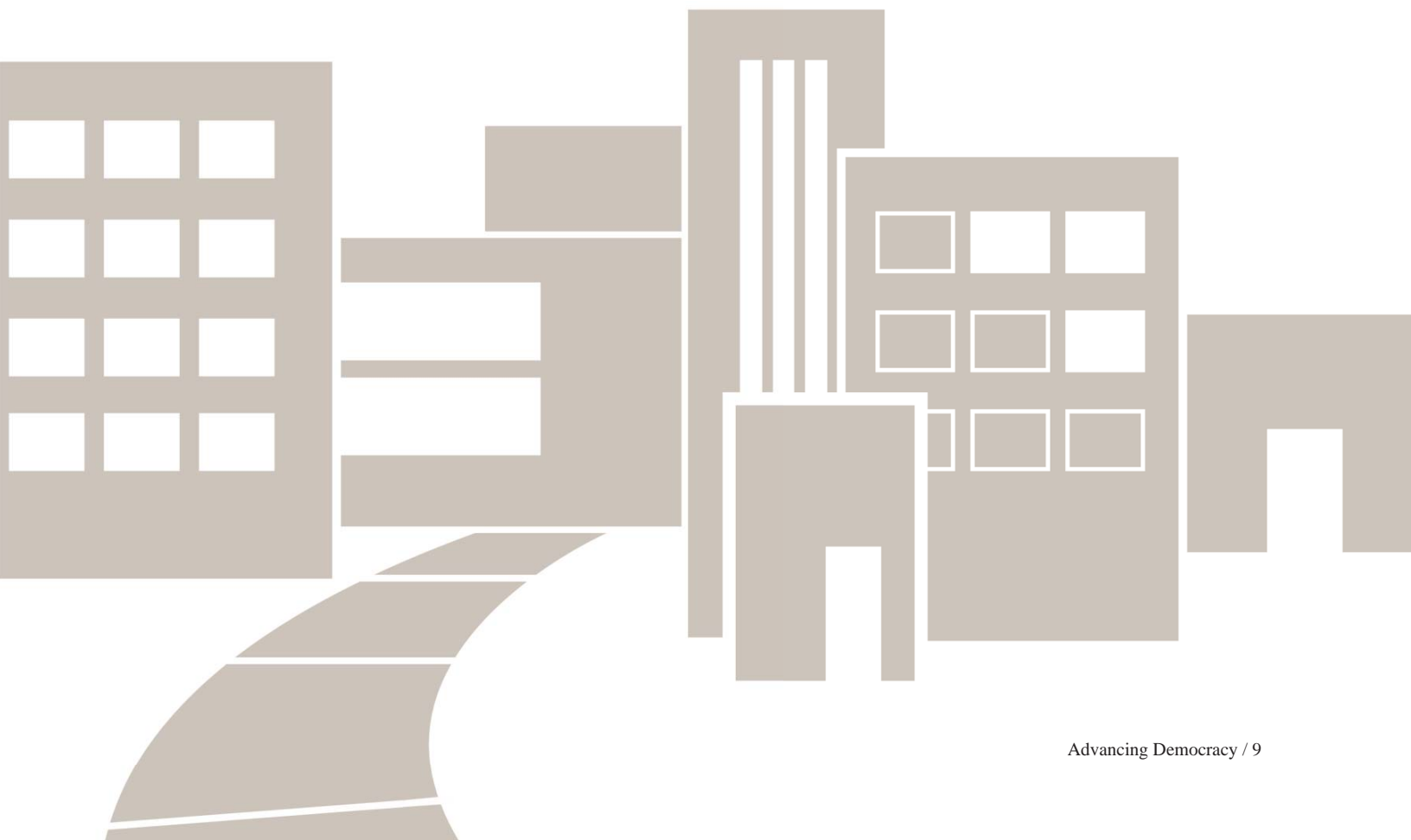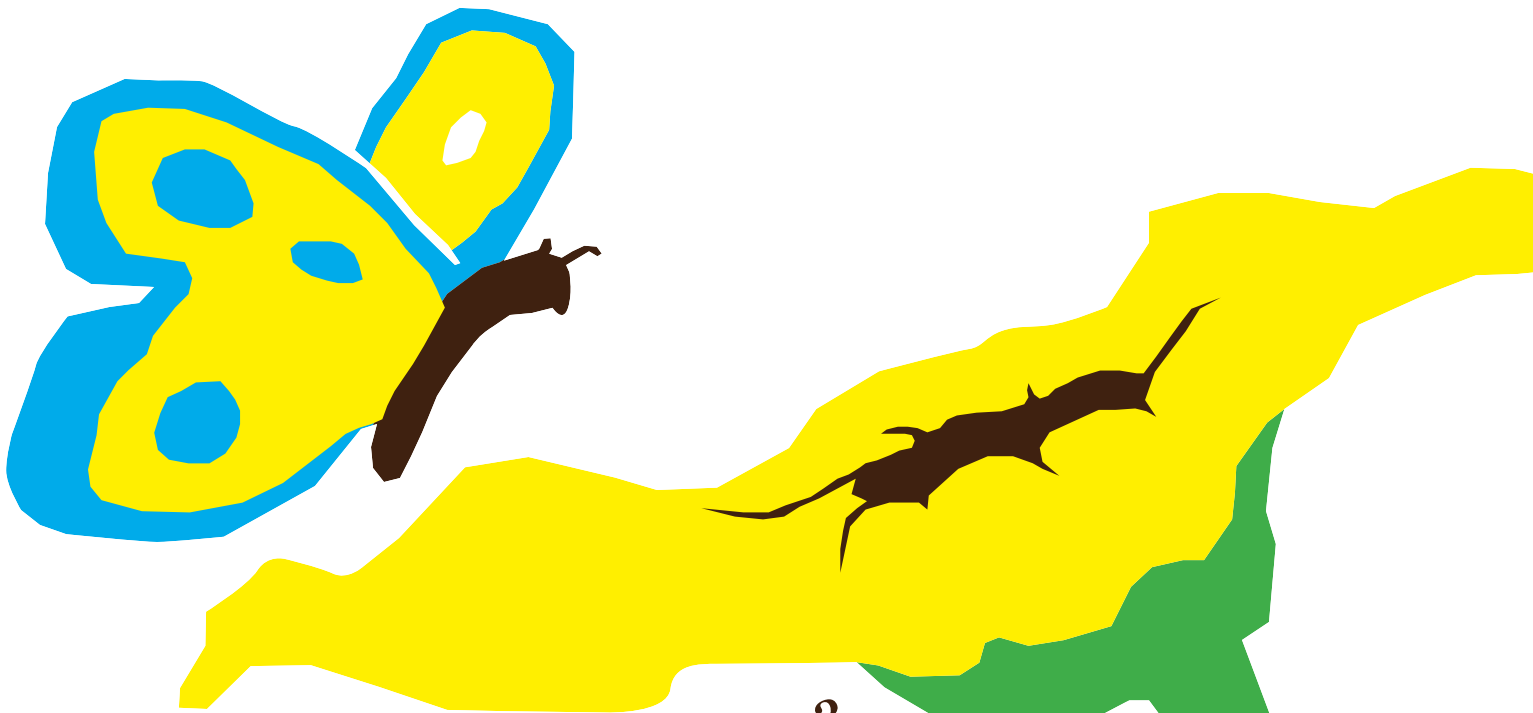
Experience²

In George Szekely's (2006) book *How Children Make Art*, we (re)discover how fun and captivating art is when given the latitude to engage the world around us on our own terms. The forming of ideas without preconceptions empowers students to explore what is of value to them in innovative ways. Along this path of discovery, students engage with complex ideas and emerge confident in their abilities to manipulate and imagine matter in unexpected ways. As art educators, we foster students imaginatively investigating their environment. We facilitate animated artful experiences where children can play with their ideas and materials to create compelling objects and memorable experiences that keep them creatively engaged with their world.

Researching whimsical and spirited artists can inspire new ideas and methods of communicating how art remains a valuable part of people's lives both in and out of the classroom. This instructional resource explores one such contemporary artist who, driven by a curiosity in human interaction, continues to explore the world in fanciful and imaginative ways. The artist discussed here, Oliver Herring, generates a multitude of ideas with regards to involving children in art making. For the purposes of this resource, I emphasize the use of technology to introduce students to stop-motion video, which is a technique used by Herring.

Recommended for Grades K–5

For schools that dedicate resources toward the purchase of computers, there is increased opportunity to extend a child's experience with art. The approach presented here is one that encourages student-initiated experiences that are then re-perceived through video. Inviting students to think big and free, the culminating activity suggested involves the class in the recreation of the art room into a "stage" where students and hand-made creations perform together. While children improvise and spontaneously respond to those around them to create fanciful flights of "motion," I suggest the use of a still camera to capture several discrete still frames. Images can then be compiled in stock software programs such as iPhoto, iMovie or Windows Movie Maker.

Borrowing from John Dewey's (1934/1980) *Art as Experience*, a child's animated experience before the camera exhibits both a "doing and undergoing," which are united and reinforced when the experience is replayed as a stop-motion short—the distance between the performing of a playful act and the watching of that act from a new perspective heightens a student's ability to connect his/her actions to an outcome thus facilitating a "complete experience" (pp. 39–46). This sense of accomplishment broadens student understandings of themselves and their ability to constructively engage with one another, technology, and the world.

Oliver Herring

Oliver Herring (b. 1964, Heidelberg, Germany) received his BFA from the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in Oxford, England where he began taking English classes in 1985. Herring later earned his MFA from Hunter College in New York (1991) where he continues to live and work.

Herring's earliest works include woven sculptures using reflective materials such as mylar or packing tapes and simple stitch knitting techniques (Figure 1). When Herring liberated himself from his knitting chair, he began working with a video camera to create stop-motion vignettes. In a number of Herring's "video sketches," we see him exploring fantastical landscapes one frame at a time. Just as Herring depended on readily available materials to create his knitted works, he used common colored papers and paints to create backdrops, costumes, and various set-dressings in his early video works.

In addition to videos, Herring creates photo-sculptures. The result of each style of working is quite different—one a linear sequence of images and the other a fragmented series of images adhered to a polystyrene form—yet the processes in which Herring engages share many like qualities.

Figure 1. *Double Rocker*, 1999; Collection of Kent and Vicki Logan (source: *art:21* (season 3), p. 158)

A close inspection of Herring's *Gloria*, 2004 (Figure 2) or *Patrick*, 2001 (Figure 3) reveals fraying edges, jagged cuts, bumpy overlaps, and spaces where the polystyrene armature is seen. Like with Herring's video work, the fragmented photographs "invoke a materiality produced by the handmade quality" (Fugami, 2005, p. 49) and as such imply that Herring privileges concerns beyond surface representation.

Generally, photographic work is understood as freezing time, yet an overview of Herring's photo-sculptures evokes the diverse conditions that must have occurred *over* time. Rather than using several reproductions of the same photograph to produce these three-dimensional reconstructions, Herring takes upwards of 1000 images over a two–three month time period (Sollins, 2005). Light changes, bodies change, artistic explorations define and redefine themselves, and Herring captures all of this nuance—all of this *motion*—in his photosculptural works that, in turn, contradict traditional understandings of photography. Herring's practice relies heavily on the presence of others who through the offering of their time provide contour to these works. This sense of collaboration—time spent in silence and in conversation between the intimate photographing of bodies and the deconstruction and revisualization of the physical body— underpins Herring's work.

Herring relinquishes control of the construction of photo-sculptures in a tour of his work scheduled to begin in October 2009 by leaving for the patrons of each venue a sculpted figure and a pile of photographic images to do with as they see fit (Sheets, 2009). In this manner, Herring invites the viewers of his work to become the makers of a new work that will join the exhibition. This playful turning of the table invites a community to re-vision the materials while at the same time providing an opportunity for viewers of art to rediscover how it feels to make art. Here the art object is no longer rooted in the singular vision of an artist, but grounded in the experience of many who, as they approach the work at different periods of construction, bring to it fresh eyes and diverse understandings. This collaborative construction in absence of the facilitator emphasizes Herring's interest in the creative process, the interaction among people, and the relationship between museums/galleries, art, and viewers.

Collaborations whether spontaneous or planned, or spontaneously planned, connect the last decade of Herring's work. In Herring's first short video titled *Exit*, 1999 (Figure 4), he is seen sitting in his knitting chair only to be rough-and-tumbled out of it as the chair seemingly climbs a nearby wall. This jump-start transforms Herring into a long-haired blonde who we see flying or swimming, or fly swimming, through a maze of color that could just as easily be above the surface of a pond as beneath it. As Herring continues to discover this new environment, we see the evolution of plants into human beings as Herring populates his work with others.

Works soon after, while   retaining
the technique and sense of whimsy   illustrated in Exit,
place Herring more often behind the camera loosely directing others who have
responded to his various advertisements soliciting for collaborators (Sollins, 2005).

The collaborative experience behind Herring's short videos is akin to that
of community built photo-sculptures in that responders to his ads have the
freedom to inform his video work in improvisational ways. Herring is a
facilitator of people and a responder to situations that emerge from within the
visitors themselves so that he might capture movements and interactions as his
participants discover them. His video *Dance 1*, 2002 (Figure 5) is evidence of
the possibilities that arise when strangers meet to create a work of art. Here,
Herring had no pre-conceived idea as he had no expectations on who or how
many people might respond to one of his ads at any given time. When the man
and woman arrived, Herring played music and asked the pair to dance. Such a

request, according to Herring, puts each
of the participants on equal ground, yet
challenges them to learn to work with one
another in a manner that precludes any
social roles either of them inhabited prior
to entering Herring's studio (Sheets, 2009).

Herring further investigates the limits
people impose on themselves as well
as the depths to which people free
themselves to act spontaneously in
TASK, which began in late 2002. TASK
offers a participatory, performative structure
wherein any number of people might engage
to interpret, create, recreate, and generate   continuous
interactions through the invention of new tasks.   Such community
collaborations can last hours. During this time   participants who may
have approached the event with trepidation have the opportunity to reflect
on whatever constraints they impose on themselves while at the same time
observing others who initiate various productive acts in which new visitors are
welcome to join at any time.

TASK, like much of Herring's work, involves the simplest of
materials and procedures: gather people in a space with
some stuff (clothing, paper, tape, wood, aluminum foil, and
so on and on and on…) and a "task pool" where a variety
of tasks   are written on several small papers (cover yourself in art,
write an opera, build a tree house, dance with everyone and so on and on and
on). The idea is that every person who takes a task must then add a new task

to the pool and execute the one taken. The result is a community performance where people:

> … express and test their own ideas in an environment without failure and success (TASK always is what it is) or any other preconceptions of what can or should be done with an idea or a material. People's tasks become absorbed into other people's tasks, objects generated from one task are recycled into someone else's task without issues of ownership or permanence. ("What is TASK?", 2008, para. 3)

While Herring produces both object oriented as well as more ephemeral situational works, the aesthetic that connects all of his work is the hand-made or made-from-what-is-at-hand, which often results in accessible works of art. Herring's process is evident in his work, which is often obviously handcrafted or very simply executed with little forethought or prep (as in *Dance 1*), thus communicating his deeper interest in spontaneity, collaboration, and the setting wherein diverse groups of people can let go and build something together without concern for preconceived expectations. In simple terms, Herring plays. His work is playful and experimental. And, those who engage in Herring's work play with ideas and each other. This quality makes Herring a most fitting contemporary artist to inspire K–5 art rooms.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

● Explore collaboration in art
● Experiment with a variety of moving image technologies
● Demonstrate myriad understandings of moving images
● Create individual and collaborative art projects
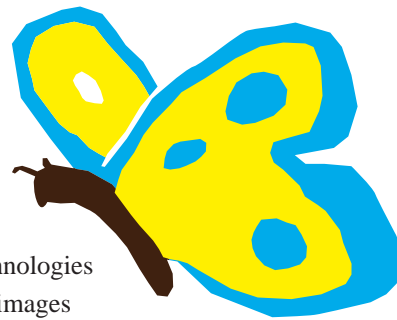
The activities suggested introduce students to stop-motion by building upon technologies discovered in the 1800s. When approaching the use of contemporary technology to produce stop-motion videos, there are a number of ways to execute the task. What I describe here requires only a tripod, digital camera and the standard software installed ready to use on most computers (iPhoto, iMovie or Windows Movie Maker).

Activities

Playing with Perception

Thaumatropes are simple devices that can help to introduce the concept of implied motion. There are many examples of thaumatropes on the Internet, with some of the most charming being no more than two small papers glued back to back over the end of a pencil. Children can draw a figure of their choice on side one, for example, a flower with petals, and on the second side repeat the flower, but this time with no petals. When the pencil is spun back and forth in a student's hands, the flower appears to gain and lose petals very quickly.

To convey the method behind stop-motion, scaffolding steps might include various motion studies that allow students to break apart what we perceive as a complete motion (such as a ballerina spin or a basketball dribble). These studies can be executed in the classroom using student volunteers: Volunteers perform an action and observers suggest 12–18[1] discrete units for a volunteer's single movement, the volunteer then shows the class what it really looks like to, say, throw a ball in 12–18 individual steps.

After a series of motion studies, students can create their own "filmstrips" by drawing the individual parts of a single movement on a strip of paper. There are plenty of templates online for both film strips and zoetropes, which are Victorian devices that can help children to understand how varying rates of spinning in combination with a varying numbers of frames can make a series of single frames appear as a continuous motion. Students can choose a zoetrope template to craft their personally designed toy and create many filmstrips documenting the various motions observed in class.

Talking points:

- Describe what happens when you spin your thaumatrope back and forth in your hands. Why do the images appear to move?
- How do the slits in the zoetrope affect your perception of your filmstrips? What changes when you view your filmstrip from above the rim?
- How do you think you could speed-up or slow-down the perceived motion of your filmstrip? (fewer or more slits to frame ratio)
- Have you seen anything else that you think might use contiguous frames to suggest continuous movement? (movies, cartoons)

Exploring Collaboratively Constructed Landscapes

Figure 6. *Little Dances of Misfortune*, 2001 (source: http://www.mefeedia.com)

Pixilation is a stop-motion technique practiced by Oliver Herring and many other artists and filmmakers to produce stop-motion videos and films using live actors. Sharing clips from Oliver Herring's *Exit* or *Little Dances of Misfortunes*, 2001 (Figure 6) with students can inspire lively discussion as students determine how these effects are created.

Talking points for *Exit*:

- Can you guess how the artist is suspending himself? Is he moving like you move when you are swimming? How did he make it look like he is swimming?
- What kind of environment did the artist create? What materials did he use? What do you think about when you see this place?

Talking points for *Little Dances of Misfortunes*:

- How do you think the artist made it look like this person is playing with all of these moving shapes? What happens to all of these little shapes? How did the artist create this effect?
- Do you think these people are really climbing and jumping off ladders? Explain.
- Have you ever seen a ladder fold itself-up like this? When? How do you suppose the artist made it look like this is what the ladder is doing?

The motion study volunteers and observers have already started to practice the technique of pixilation by breaking a range of motion into singular poses. To ensure understanding of the "trickier" motions, having the students create a chorus line of synchronized movements (such as gliding across the frame only to swirl back with one leg in the air and spin out of the frame) can be an inclusive and fun way to test the method in front of a camera before any more planning takes place. The key is to keep the camera stationary and emphasize that *the motion occurs between still shots*. Advise performers that 12–18 unique poses are required for one second of playback. Because this activity often results in children scooting around on their bellies or gliding across frame on a single foot, capturing 15+ unique poses is easily obtainable as students need only inch over between shots—the more poses per "motion" the smoother the playback. Drop the frames from the test exploration into a video timeline (using iPhoto, iMovie, or Windows Movie Maker) and watch the stop-motion video.

Talking points:

- Did you know your actions would look like this when saved in the computer? Explain.
- Where/when is the motion really occurring? (between takes) Why does it look like you are really moving when you watch the video?

As a culminating activity, have available plenty of materials around the room for "shopping." Items such recycled cardboard, paints, rolls of colored butcher paper, newsprint, scissors, colored construction papers, etc., can inspire children and give them tremendous flexibility in constructing fanciful backgrounds and lively, animated set dressings. To mix-up the pace a bit from the test activity, clear a large floor space in the art room for set creation (or locate another large space the class can occupy for one or more days) and designate an elevated area for the camera and tripod.

All of the students can participate in creating a set and prepping set dressings. Individuals and small groups can collaborate to construct vignettes that incorporate both people and things "floating" in and across the set. Having the art room floor as the set (as opposed to the walls) allows children to defy gravity (as in *Little Dances of Misfortunes*), to capture themselves, for instance, somersaulting (one frame at a time) over a forest of two-dimensional trees while flowers and planets magically change colors and flit around them. Because the camera and tripod must be elevated to capture the floor as backdrop, I suggest instructors operate the camera while students manage the set and direction.

Once all of the vignettes imagined by the students are captured, drop the images into a timeline (or create a video clip per vignette). Have students guide the ordering of the vignettes, design title screens and select a sound track. The video can be saved to disc and/or published on the school's intranet/web site so all can enjoy.

Talking points:

- Describe how it felt to work with so many people to create our set.
- What were some times when you felt really inspired by what someone else was doing? Were there times you felt you couldn't do what you really wanted to do? How did you work through these situations?
- During this activity, when did it feel like you were making art? What about those experiences made them "artful"?
- What was your favorite part of the activity? (constructing objects for the set, performing the "stop-motions," directing someone else in their movement, etc.)
- How does your understanding of the creation of the stage and set change when you see the video? How do you think the video would be if we didn't all work together?
- Referring to the video, what are some words that describe what you see? Is this video art? Why?

Assessment and Conclusion

Leveraging technologies that are currently available in schools not only maximizes school resources, but also expands the breadth and depth of a child's experience by exposing him/her to the many playful uses of technologies that often appear in schools for their utility as teacher/tester. Connecting students to "work tools" like computers in fun and innovative ways enhances creative thinking and reinforces creative engagements with their day-to-day worlds, which, in turn, positions creativity as a worthwhile and meaningful experience to be nurtured throughout one's life.

Educators using this instructional resource in their classroom can observe the growth of their students through discussion, the application of new skills and concepts as well as assess the students' ability to work together. The activities can be adjusted to match the developmental needs of the class including, but not limited to, asking students to be responsible for photographing, downloading, and creating individual video works.

Resources

http://www.pbs.org/art21
http://www.youtube.com
http://oliverherringtask.wordpress.com/
http://en.wikipedia.org
http://www.ubu.com

End Notes

[1] To imply continuous movement, generally anywhere between 6–30 frames per one second of playback are required. The range is dependent on the specific media used (cheaply produced cel animation through to video camera capture). The fewer frames per second, the more stilted the motion. The greater the number of frames per second, the smoother the motion. For the stop-motion technique proposed here, 12–18 frames per one second of playback will effectively convey a sense of motion, thus asking students to break motion into this range of parts prepares them for the production of a stop-motion video.

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