

**VALUING THE ARTS ON THEIR OWN TERMS?
(Ceci n'est pas une pipe.)**

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN
13 October 2006**

**Constance Bumgarner Gee ©
Vanderbilt University**

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Valuing the arts on their own terms, hummm... This presentation title was assigned to me by the NASAD Executive Committee, and, dutifully, I accepted it. I did make one small change; I added the question mark. The question is two-fold: What does it mean to value the arts on their own terms and, once we've figured that out, is it really such a good idea? Allow me to answer both of those questions right up front so that should you zone out during the course of this rather lengthy monologue or feel the need to adjourn to the bar you'll still be able to join the debate about the wrong-headedness of the keynote speaker later on this evening.

Valuing the arts on their own terms means to ascribe the worth of a specific art form in terms of its intrinsic qualities. Let us take for example the visual arts. Intrinsic qualities of visual works of art are the sensorial, intellectual, and/or emotional stimuli derived from images and compositions of arranged lines, colors, textures, shapes, and forms or, in the case of *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, the coupling of words and images. Thus, to value the visual arts on their own terms means to place great worth on the knowledge, experience, meaning, and observational and manual skills — in short, ways of thinking and doing — that emerge from contemplation of and reaction to such stimuli.

Is valuing the arts on their own terms a good idea? I believe it is. But is *justifying* the arts on their own terms a good idea? Maybe so, maybe not... it depends...

From Valuing to Justifying and Advocating

Before grappling further with the issue of valuing the arts on their own terms (I've been given an hour to speak so you're not getting off that easy — you will get 3 credit hours for this session), I suppose we need to consider other ways in which the arts are valued even though, I confess, simply valuing them on their own terms is good enough for me. Frankly, I think it's good enough for most people who are genuinely engaged with, and care about, a particular art form. But we've got to think a bit bigger here (or at least more deviously, rather, creatively) because the truth of it is that informing the chancellor of a major research university: "Mr. Chancellor, I realize the university only has an annual budget of \$2.2 billion and the art department already gets a whopping .001% (one 1-thousandth) of that, but, you know we really could use ten times that amount because the art faculty and our students value greatly the knowledge, experience, meaning, and observational and manual skills we derive from making art and thinking about the visual properties and significance of works of art and, well, we'd like to value it ten-times more" — might not get you that additional \$20 million. Many seasoned arts administrators have come to realize that simply leveling with college presidents, grant makers, and politicians about the main reason we care about the arts — that is, personal sustenance and satisfaction — may not be the savviest marketing approach.

So as I said before, we've got to think bigger this morning; we've got to give those power people bigger, broader, badder *raisons d'être* to give us more support or, at the very least, not to take away what we have. And, besides all that, it is actually helpful to consider periodically probable pro- and con-

sequences that grow out of the various ways we explain to others why our own specific work in the arts and arts programming in general, is worthy of their engagement and support.

Let me be clear from the beginning that my focus this morning will be on the ways in which we value and justify *educational* programming in the arts. This is because I am an educator and you are educators. You may also be practicing artists but your paychecks are signed by a college official even if you do have direct deposit. Thus, when I discuss our and others' penchant for justifying the arts by way of their impact on economic development, I will focus on the ways in which a general or professional arts education is thought to contribute to that goal, not in the broader terms of how building a performing arts center will "bring new life" into a downtown sucked dry by surrounding mega-malls or of the "multiplier effect" of arts spending as tallied in those "arts and the economy" and "the arts means business" brochures that claim that for every public dollar spent on arts programming the community — i.e., restaurateurs, dry cleaners, parking lot owners, and babysitters — gets \$11 in return. Goodness gracious, no wonder people complain about the expense of going to an arts event!

And yes, I know significant differences exist in the way we think about K-12 — or P-12 as we are now suppose to call it (don't leave out those 4 year olds!) — versus college. (I wonder at what point we'll begin saying N[nursery]-12 or PN[pre-natal]-12?) Yet, as the Commission on the Future of Higher Education under direction of the U.S. Department of Education pushes to impose standardized testing at the university level, those of you who haven't paid much attention to that credo's effect on the place and space for arts programming K-12 might want to check it out. Whether K-12 or college we have much in common, more commonalities than differences, I believe. Certainly that is true when we consider our ways of thinking and talking about why art matters, as we will do this morning. And lest you grow impatient of my attention to K-12, please remember K-12 is from whence your students come, unless they are home-schooled and have a GED.

A third caveat: I am aware and honored that I am speechifying to the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, not just art but also *design*. My apologies but I am not going to talk much about how design is valued because the design profession already seems to do that quite well *thankyouverymuch* — and also because art and design are two different animals when it comes to getting people to understand why they are important. Design is a thoroughbred racehorse and art is a duckbilled platypus. Besides, when it comes to articulating the value of that ambiguous, aggregate, lazy term "the arts," I dare say designers have just as difficult a time of it as do the rest of us. I have been perusing enviously the website of AIGA, the professional association for design, in preparation for this talk and am convinced those of us in studio art, art history, and art education could learn from AIGA's tactics and the clarity and solidarity of its message. But more on that later.

Ways of Valuing

Most of us involved in arts programming and arts education K-university think and talk about the arts as they affect a) the individual as a person, b) the individual as a contributing member of society, and c) the human community. Valuing the arts on their own merits, that is, for the sensorial, intellectual, and emotional nourishment derived from deep engagement with an art form is, I believe, the most fundamental and genuine way we *think* about the affects of art or music or dance or theatre on the individual, *ourselves* first and foremost.

As art school presidents and deans, chairs of art or art history departments, even as humble art faculty, we also think a lot about how the practice and study of art contributes to our students' ability to engage more deeply, broadly, and insightfully in the world around them. This line of thinking leads us to the impact of the arts on b) the individual as a contributing member of society and c) the human community. We in the arts link closely emotional, intellectual, and, yes, *spiritual* growth with an

individual's capacity to "contribute to society," by way of acting as a responsible, industrious, and empathetic person both privately and in the public realm. The empathetic part is of particular note as we reason that gaining insight into the belief systems, values, and biases of one's own and other cultures opens hearts and minds, breaks down barriers, and encourages self-reflection, out of which comes greater understanding of and, therefore, respect for others. Naturally we think engagement with an art form assists with the development of such attributes and dispositions because, well, look what it did for us!

But we can't let it rest there because generally speaking we're a philosophical and, dare I say, liberal lot and we like to ruminate on HUMANITY writ large. Thus, because we still want to do our painting (whether it be modernist or postmodernist) or our research (whether on the Bauhaus or *Womanhouse*) but also want to Save The World we leap courageously across the divide between that which an art-mindful individual can affect to the aggregate effect of all the world's art-mindful individuals on c) the human community.

This is not a cynical observation. Although, it may be somewhat humorous when one considers the progression of our thinking in the clear light of day, or rather, under the harsh florescent lights of a hotel ballroom qua conference hall. I sincerely think we earnestly make this equation because, as we read about and at times experience the abundant chaos, cruelty, and ignorance in the world around us and compare it with the humanistic pleasures and relative sanity of an art-centered life, we believe — not unlike the reasonably religious — that if everyone or most everyone (some people are just hopeless) partook of the body Art, the world would be a much better place and there would be fewer Wal-Marts and more smart boutiques to boot.

These relatively straightforward, or at least genuine, ways of thinking about what art means to us personally and could mean to others (if they'd only listen) begin to get more circuitous when we find ourselves in the position of having to justify our art programs and why we do what we do. And it seems we have to do that a lot.

The Need to Justify

I've delayed getting to this point as long as possible because here is where it begins to get all mucked up. So if, like myself, you'd rather keep things simple and to the point, you'd rather just get on about the business of living and learning, you like working in your garden and that sort of thing, then now is the time to escape this conference hotel and take a stroll over to the Walker Art Center or do a little shopping. In fact, if all of you would like to do just that, I'll join you. ...Alright then, you've been warned; we will proceed.

Unfortunately, those of us who consider ourselves arts educators (and I do hope as art college presidents, art deans, and department chairs you proudly claim that nomenclature) — are subject to the same what's in what's out machinations as the rest of the education community, except even more so. This is especially true if one is part of the K-12 enterprise, whether as a middle school art teacher or as a university professor who prepares aspiring middle school art teachers. Although things *are* fast heating up for general university arts programming with recent federally-sponsored demands for standardized testing and tuition cost controls. While math teachers may be required to annually justify their budgetary expenditures, it is doubtful (almost unthinkable!) that they would have to justify why their subject area merits being included in the school curricula. That's because math is in; of course it's always been in but these days it's *really* in. I guess that's because math is so *not* in with many young people. They resist learning much about it even though officials now require teachers to force it into their gullets *foie gras* style. On the other hand, art is out, has always been out, or at least has never really been in, even though it is in with many students. (The fact that art is in with students and they have been known to cheerfully do art after school and during summer vacation — unlike math — is actually not helpful to our perpetual

efforts to keep art and art teachers in the public schools. But I will speak briefly on that later.) Therefore, in order to survive and prosper, it is deemed necessary to attach to and align with what is in, which most often translates into that which is causing the most public angst and alarm.

Terrorism and national security aside for the moment, what societal concerns should our schools and universities address and amend? And in what ways do we as professionals with a vested interest in the arts justify our work and programs in relation to such issues? Jacques Barzun (2002) states (rather quaintly I think) the single purpose of schools is “to remove ignorance.” Ignorance affects all manner of public undertakings but, unfortunately, is not a particularly pressing societal concern unless its removal is directed specifically toward the attainment of “a good job.” The Commission on the Future of Higher Education and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings are most concerned with the reported inability of colleges and universities to “turn out students qualified to compete in the global economy” (*The New York Times*, 11 August 2006). Societal concerns, for the next generation, boil down to *one* goal — the development of young people into responsible adults who can get and hold onto a job. Of course, we also want them to be healthy, cheerful, and kind. We want that for them for many reasons not the least being that we recognize those attributes as important pre-conditions and dispositions for gainful employment.

What knowledge, skills, and attributes (in addition to healthiness, cheerfulness, and kindness) are needed to become and remain gainfully employed? At a minimum, one needs to be literate and numerate, get along with others, able to take directions and execute orders. As one moves up the employment ladder, from laborer to professional, from employee to employer, from job to career, emphases placed on basic reading and math skills and on working well within a group, shift toward the need for independent and critical thinking, creative problem solving, management skills, and self-motivation. Even so, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education reports that many students who have earned college degrees “have not actually mastered the reading, writing and thinking skills we expect of college graduates” (*The New York Times*, 11 August 2006).

How do we justify our arts programs and practice in relation to such needs and expectations? Generally speaking, we have been much more adept and at ease relating arts study and experience to desired changes in attitude and behavior (e.g., self-esteem, working collaboratively, self-motivation) and to the achievement of advanced but ambiguous capacities (e.g., critical thinking, creative problem solving) than to the attainment of specific on-the-job knowledge and skills (i.e., literacy and numeracy). Over the past decade, however, the high profiles of various studies asserting that learning in the arts improves reading, writing, and math skills has altered substantially the character of our justifications apropos to our contributions to the preparation of the next generation of responsible, employable, successful adults. (Let me reiterate that architecture, graphic, and product design are commercial professions that do not require justification in these terms; besides, it is rumored that architects and industrial designers already do math.)

Ultimately, we have become savvier to the ways and demands of the world as our intensely competitive, market-drenched society continually ups the ante for more product, promise, and proof. We recognize that justification is defensive and reactive while advocacy is offensive and pro-active. Justifying is a position; advocating, like marketing, is a strategy.

I have spoken about our private valuing of the arts in our students’ lives and in our own, and of the perennial need to justify funding for arts programming, specifically within the K-university structure. I am speaking about matters of justification and about matters of values and how the two are often at variance with one another. Let us now consider what happens as we move from justification to advocacy, that is, to consumer marketing strategies.

“A” is for Art! “A” is for Achievement!

And “A” is for advocacy. Advocacy strategies for greater public and political support of school-based, after-school, and “non-school” arts education, experience, exposure programming, and for the arts and community organizations that offer such programming, to focus primarily on three battlefronts. The first is spiritual and moral development, including emotional maturation. An increasingly critical second front is arts education’s ability to contribute to brain and skill development. The third major battle line is the improvement of one’s self-esteem and self-image linked directly to greater mental and physical well-being. My own personal shorthand for this advocacy trinity strategy of Spirit, Mind, and Body is the “YMCA Approach.”

Advocacy statements in support of our first front, spiritual and moral development, take this form:

- Arts learning experiences help students to better know themselves and to better relate to and communicate with those around them.
- Arts education fosters tolerance of and appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity.
- Arts education improves children’s attitudes toward school.
- In-school and community-based arts programming improves self-esteem, curbs delinquent behavior, teaches discipline, and helps students to better perform academically.

The desire to impart certain ethical values is wrapped up inextricably in this way of articulating why the arts merit inclusion in the lives of young people. Educators, artists, and others who champion such outcomes also speak often of the role arts learning can play in alleviating social injustice. Currently, a small but determined group of university faculty is intent on redefining the content and practice of art education by shifting the focus of study away from art — and toward “visual culture.” Although they include the fine arts in their sweeping definition of what all visual culture encompasses, their curriculum research and teaching generally attends to popular culture and mass media (popular film, video, and television shows, advertising, and the design of computer games, toys, apparel, shopping malls, amusement parks, etc.). In the words of one of its proponents, “Visual culture studies adopt a critical view of society, seeing society as structured in power relationships that are unequal and unfair.” (Duncum, 2003) Referred to as “VCAE” at the K-12 level, visual culture art education comes out of a mix of postmodern/multicultural/feminist/queer theories, is aggressively anti-capitalist, and dedicated to social reconstruction largely through analyses of individual and group identity construction.

Actual advocacy statements addressing our second front, brain and skill development, make these claims:

- Students with high levels of arts participation outperform “arts-poor” students on virtually every academic performance measure.
- Students who study or participate in the arts score higher on standardized tests.
- Music study improves math scores and spatial skills; reading skills are enhanced by arts learning, particularly through theatre and the visual arts.
- Arts education stimulates creativity, builds communications skills, promotes teamwork, and engenders love of learning in all subject areas.
- Arts education teaches critical thinking and higher order thinking skills, providing a competitive edge for getting a job in the future.

“Workforce readiness,” economic development, and maintaining our global competitiveness — big, tall issues tied explicitly to national security — loom large over advocacy statements attesting to the arts’ bottom line value for our workforce in-training and nation at large. In this manner, the study of an art form is valued for its alleged ability to improve skills in more job-important school subjects. There is tremendous pressure on all of education across the disciplines to produce in this arena.

Not too long after school visual arts instruction shifted from a utilitarian focus on manual skill to creative self-expression (reflecting the New York art world’s abstract expressionist phase), Sputnik happened. You all know the fall-out of Sputnik on education — four words: more science, more mathematics. Thus began attempts by arts educators and researchers to find knowledge and skill transfer between arts learning and academics. Five decades and over 11,000 articles, books, conference presentations, and sundry unpublished papers later, Harvard Project Zero researchers, Ellen Winner and Lois Hetland, headed up a massive research effort (the Reviewing Education and the Arts Project or “REAP”) to ascertain the validity of wide-ranging claims that arts study, experience, or exposure lead to various forms of academic improvement. Published in 2000, their resulting report, *The Arts and Academic Achievement: What the Evidence Shows*, concluded that “reliable causal links” between arts study and improved academic achievement could be found in three areas only: 1) listening to music, and spatial-temporal reasoning; 2) learning to play music and spatial reasoning; and 3) drama (enacting texts) and verbal skills. The effects of the first area, listening to music and spatial-temporal reasoning, lasted a few hours, at most, but it was heralded loud and far as the “Mozart Effect.” Winner and Hetland (2001) cautioned strongly against justifying the arts instrumentally as “a dangerous (and peculiarly American) practice.”

The REAP report made a lot of people angry and unhappy, most notably the research contributors to and publishers of the 1999 federal government advocacy document, *Champions of Change*. *Champions* championed the “proven” effects of all manner of arts encounters on increased academic performance. Defenders of this stance have continued to recycle and reassert the data presented in *Champions*, most often in the form of government-funded advocacy publications presented as research studies. *Critical Links*, published in 2002 by the Arts Education Partnership in direct response to the REAP report, is one of many such federally-funded “advo-search” studies.

Gradually, however, their strategy has shifted from tying arts learning *per se* to higher math and reading scores to proclaiming the positive and substantial effects of “arts integrated programming” on learning both in “the basics” and the arts, although none of the largest and most lauded arts integrated programs have actually assessed arts learning. Another strategic decision by arts transfer/arts integration advocates has been to focus the good news of academic and social benefits on low-income, disadvantaged, urban and rural at-risk students. The word is that those students actually benefit more from arts integrated programs than do regular students. In this way two of the nation’s most worrisome problems related to education and, ultimately, the economy are perceived as being addressed: 1) poor math and reading test scores and 2) the poor prospects of poor children.

Unfortunately, many of the more outspoken arts integration advocates (generally those with a stake in a specific program) pit the most certainly not new concept of arts integration against “stand alone,” “conventional” (their terms) arts instruction. As do many visual culture art education proponents, they fail to acknowledge the difficult work and impressive advances made in the development of arts curriculum and pedagogy over the past three decades. Instead, they describe their philosophy and methods as if those long-evolving ideas and hard-won advances *originated* with their programs. In their eagerness to set themselves apart from “traditional” arts education — for the sake of fame and/or funding one must presume — they cherry-pick and co-opt the best of what has been accomplished, tout it as their own, and then define their opponent’s practice in terms of what is left over.

Also like the VCAE-ers, the arts integrationists call for a seismic shift of the content and mission of arts instruction — the former for purposes of social reconstruction, the latter purportedly to improve student learning in math, reading, science, and social studies. But unlike the VCAE crowd, which after all is a part of the professional arts education community, arts integration advocates argue for visiting artists (or “teaching artists”) over K-12 arts specialists. Artists are described as being “imperative” to successful arts integration; K-12 arts specialists are useful as residency coordinators if they are mentioned at all.¹

Advocacy statements promising action on our third front, mental and physical well-being, frequently focus more on adults than students with the significant exception of “underserved youth” and “at-risk” students of all ages. I must say that our music colleagues are way out in front on this line of battle; but, if we can get the same sort of marketing support from art supply businesses that they receive from musical instrument merchants, we might be able to catch up. American Music Conference, an affiliate of MENC-The National Association for Music Education, spotlights wellness through music-making as a major part of its advocacy efforts. Its Music Research webpage offers links to numerous “scientific findings” that making music provides “measurable improvements in human well-being.” A headline sampling of such studies are: “Music Therapy Increases Serum Melatonin Levels in Patients With Alzheimer’s Disease,” “Group Drumming Boosts Cancer-Killer Cells,” and my favorite, “Recreational Music Program Shows Potential to Combat Nursing Shortage” (American Music Conference, 2006). (Just so you all don’t feel slighted, the American Art Therapy Association website links to a news article reporting that visual art also fights Alzheimer’s [Lazo, 2006]). The National Association of Music Merchants asserts that *making* music — on the musical instruments its members sell — makes you healthier and increases your longevity, while Hospital Audiences, Inc. (1996) — which sells programs and performances to hospitals — insists that simply being a part of an arts audience has a “beneficial impact on health and wellness” (1).

The larger message is that art soothes us, helps us to “get in touch” with and express our “inner feelings.” Adherents of mind/body medicine believe that repression of emotion is not only detrimental psychologically but contributes to or even causes physical disease. The acknowledgement and release of emotion, especially within the safe confines of a support group, is believed to have a positive impact on one’s mental and physical health. Arts advocates posit that being able to creatively and effectively express oneself leads to a sense of “empowerment,” a decidedly positive feeling that results in a healthier mental state, greater self-awareness, and improved self-image. Consequently, we feel better about ourselves and more empathetic toward others, dispositions that make us happier and help us to live not only fuller but longer lives. In this respect, art is valued for providing “creative outlets” for self-expression — that is, the release and communication of emotion and ideas — an emotionally, mentally, and physically beneficial pursuit.

Along these same lines is the promotion of art as a means of conflict resolution. The National Endowment for the Arts and The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2002) collaborated in the publication of *The Art in Peacemaking: A Guide to Integrating Conflict Resolution Education Into Youth Arts Programs*. (Perhaps we could get them to write a sequel: *The Art in Peacemaking: A Guide to Integrating Conflict Resolution Education Into University Art Departments*.) The introduction explains that “the fundamental values of the art making experience: trust, risk-taking, respect for process, principled critique, and pride in a finished product...[lead students to] experience positive motivation, intense self-discipline, confidence, and perseverance” (6). Motivation, self-discipline, and confidence bring this advocacy narrative back full circle to spiritual and moral development for the good of the individual and society. Spirit, Mind, and Body.

And Now, A Word From Our “Sponsor”

The most high profile arts advocacy campaign of all is conducted at the federal level by the National Endowment for the Arts, Americans for the Arts, the Arts Education Partnership, and the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities. With regard to arts education, or rather, the more all-encompassing and less school-associated term, “arts learning experiences,” those agencies and organizations work together as one. They co-sponsor studies (such as *Champions for Change* and *Critical Links*), co-publish reports on those studies, and reference, reinforce, and recycle continuously one another’s programs and “research findings” throughout their printed materials and conjoined electronic media. For several reasons, a key one being the defense and promotion of the National Endowment, this group has made it their collaborative mission to speak on behalf of arts education/arts participation pre-natal through life, and, they have had some admirable successes. Their participation in field-wide efforts to include the arts as core subjects in Goals 2000 legislation is deserving of praise. Yet, they relentlessly market a message that must be noted in the context of our topic of valuing the arts. This message, served up as the “central finding” in their aptly titled 1999 report, *Gaining the Arts Advantage*, is that the involvement of the non-profit arts world — specifically, community arts organizations and individual artists — is “the single most critical factor” in the determination of whether or not *school arts programs* are able to successfully deliver the goods as advocated (9).

You might discern that some members of the K-12 arts education community, particularly those most concerned with the preparation and ongoing support of highly capable K-12 arts teachers, view that much acclaimed “research finding” as, well, a bit self-serving, since it is the non-profit arts world that comprises the constituency of the NEA and its spawn, state and community arts agencies. In-school, arts exposure-type programs such as performance assemblies and artist residencies are an important source of revenue for small performing arts groups and individual artists. Field trips help art museums fulfill their non-profit duty to provide charitable services, even though very often most or all of the funding for field trips is provided by the school district itself. But in fact, much of the federal arts bureaucracy’s campaigning and grant-making dispenses with schools altogether, focusing instead on “arts learning experiences” delivered by local arts groups and artists in after-school and summer programs and in community venues throughout the year. Advocacy, promoting in-school and non-school arts programs provided by community arts organizations and individual artists, frequently and purposefully blurs the distinction between in-depth study of the arts and arts exposure experiences. Some ascribe this way of valuing arts education as a means of placating political opponents of government arts subsidies whilst providing public funding for arts groups and employment opportunities for artists. Admittedly, that may be an ungenerous way of characterizing the motivations of others within our greater arts family.² But it does serve as a ready example of the reality that when we advocate for the arts we are not just encouraging support for the arts in general, although often that is the way it sounds, we seek support for specific policies and programs in which we have a vested interest. We (and they) seek political vantage and the credit, influence, and funding that is to be had by gaining that vantage.

Our time is running short and we must move on to answering the questions that I somehow thought I could answer when I wrote the program blurb: What happens when study and support of the arts, in particular the visual arts, are justified primarily in terms of what they accomplish for economic development, social justice, and learning in other subjects? What are the promises and pitfalls of mounting a continuous series of new promotional arguments to justify what we do as educators and as artists? How do we balance the push-pull of drawing attention to the vast interconnectedness of art and design to daily life and integrated learning with our responsibility of keeping central the essence of art itself?

The Treachery of Images

Rene Magritte's painting, *La trahison des images* — the treachery or betrayal of images — is a painting not a pipe, a very realistic image of the object but *not* the object itself. Images can be treacherous in that there may be little connection between an object and what represents it. In fact, the representation may obscure or hide the true reality of the thing itself. To a very real extent that is what happens when we justify the study and support of the arts in extrinsic terms — we obscure the true reality, the intrinsic qualities of the thing, art, itself. Ever changing marketing messages of art's omnipotent curative powers and, consequently, of the duties and capabilities of arts educators and artists confound and disappoint more than they enlighten and convince.

In his essay, "Art Education in a World of Cross-purposes," Sam Hope (2004) provides a useful framework to organize our rethinking and, perhaps, remaking of the art education field. He encourages us to attend foremost to issues impacting the health and survival of the field, posing the principal question: "How well does the field delineate, and then protect, those things that are essential to its survival?" All other policy and programmatic decisions are subsequent to the variables affecting survival and health. Hope lists "several things that the field must have in order to exist," the first being "a definition of content and purpose sufficient to distinguish art education from other fields." We must answer the question: "What is unique about what we do and the content for which we are responsible?" For policymakers, the public, and ourselves we must be able to answer the question: "Why are the unique things we do worthwhile?" The answers to those questions must then guide us in how we prepare new professionals, and in the weighing of teaching priorities and resource allocations. We must make decisions about curriculum balance and methodological approaches — issues of quality and quantity upon which the health of the field hinges.

Ideological exchanges are ongoing between scholars in the composite field of art, design, art history and criticism, and art education. We pen articles and make speeches in response to one another's theories and assertions about the content and pedagogy of art and design. Such conversations and confrontations are necessary and healthy for refinement of our thinking, delineation of our values, and advancement of knowledge and practice in our collective field.

Visual culture art education (VCAE) deems serious attention from visual arts scholars and pedagogues for reasons of field content delineation, assessment of professional responsibilities and capabilities, and its overt socio-political agenda. Frankly, I agree with the politics of VCAE. I care deeply about social injustice and inequality, the destruction of our natural environment, and the pernicious effects of macho capitalism. But I do not agree that our schools should serve as demagogic training centers, not only because that is antithetical to the practice and function of liberal education but because if our side can do it then the other side can too. And then, Dorothy, we are all in Kansas. On the other hand, there is merit in helping students understand marketing methods and underlying messages of advertising, and to recognize how personal and cultural values are reflected and shaped through all manner of object and space design, even via Barbie dolls and amusement parks, I suppose. Yet, if we are to reassert and retain a common, cohesive, identifiable knowledge core, we will need to be judicious about the emphasis we place on such material within the general art curriculum.

We must also examine honestly our teaching intent. At what point does it tip from educating broadly to narrow proselytizing? Our purpose, I hope, is to open minds to a variety of viewpoints rather than to corral them into alignment with our own. It is unrealistic and disingenuous not to acknowledge the value-laden nature of teaching; yet, we must make every effort to present evenhandedly ideologically oriented subject matter — a tricky proposition for self-proclaimed political and social activists. When we dedicate our teaching to social reconstruction, when do we become what we oppose?

As you well know, it demands deep knowledge of a subject to present it wholly, that is, from various perspectives embedded in historical, socio-political, and, in the case of art and design, aesthetic context. To teach comprehensively and connectively is a challenging task even if one's focus remains primarily within the extended visual arts field. As we reach across the map of visual culture and into adjacent disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, world history, political science, and economics we need to critically reassess our own and our colleagues' professional and intellectual capabilities. Individually and collectively we are in serious trouble when we degenerate from scholar to dilettante. Add "integrated arts," as modeled by some of its most ardent advocates, into the more-is-more mix and our opportunities for dilettantism and dissolution multiply. Our projected image of mega-purposed art education negates the importance and vitiates the essence of art itself.

Truth (and Consequences) in Advertising

It is ironic that designers, the masters of perceptual manipulation and image making, are so much more straightforward in defining the value of design and delineating what design is and is not than the rest of the art world is at communicating the value of art (forget about what art is and is not!). AIGA (2006a) has published a series of succinct booklets for designers and clients in response to "urgent requests" from its members "to help them speak to external audiences about their roles as designers and the value of great design." *A Client's Guide to Design: How to Get the Most Out of the Process* (2001) begins by informing the prospective client:

The fundamental premise here is that anything worth doing is worth doing well, but if it's to be done well, it must first be valued. Design — good design — is not cheap. You would be better served to spend your money on something else if you don't place a high value on what it can achieve. There's a view in Buddhism that there's no "good" karma and no "bad" karma, there's just karma. The same *can't* be said for design (4).

Although design "often has the properties of good looks," the tutorial continues, design is not style but rather "the underlying structure of communicating — [it is] the idea, not merely the surface qualities" (6).

Why do you design? (2006b) was produced to provide "core messages for which [designers] can create a common chorus... to make clear to clients that 'design' is becoming 'Design,' a larger concept that includes strategy as well as artifacts..." The message is *design is a way of thinking*. AIGA charges its members to repeat this message and to employ regularly the presented "common vocabulary on the role of the designer" (2-4).

OK, so you can't imagine the College Art Association (CAA) presenting it all so tidily, providing their members a "common vocabulary" by which to describe the value of art and role of artists or art historians. The National Art Education Association (NAEA) has involved itself to a greater extent in framing field purposes and expectations for learning, most notably in the National Standards for K-12 Visual Arts Education. Such worthy offerings aside, what may be the most difficult to imagine is either the CAA or NAEA membership attempting seriously to incorporate such prescribed rhetoric into its everyday way of speaking to others about professional roles and values. And AIGA's pronouncement about "design" becoming "Design," well, that is the antithesis of what art is becoming! In my lifetime "Art" has become "art" and is fast becoming "visual culture" — a bloated, blurry realm in which the waning concept of "art" holds no privileged place and where aesthetics is treated as a quaint relic at best, but more often as a weapon of cultural oppression and colonialization. As I said at the beginning of this speech such a long, long time ago — the professional field of design and that of art are two different animals.

Yet, those designers may be on to something. To stand right up and declare “good design is not cheap” and must be valued, and you’d best “spend your money on something else if you don’t place a high value on what it can achieve.” In short, we know who we are and what we’re worth! And (Oh! Be still my heart!) *there is good design and bad design!* What chutzpah! My goodness, wouldn’t it be liberating to talk like that about our art and art education programs?! To say art is important to study because, like design, it is a world-altering way of thinking and doing and living. That attaining real knowledge of art is not easy; in fact, it is as demanding intellectually as science and mathematics — but real knowledge and understanding of art *can* be had and is worth having because owning the capacity to engage deeply the sensorial, intellectual, and emotional stimuli of significant works of art is profoundly humanizing and mind expanding. And, by the way, there is good art and bad art and good teaching and bad teaching, and if you don’t place a high value on the world knowledge that grows out of arts learning then you’d best spend your money on... oops! What am I saying? Sorry, I got carried away. I almost proclaimed that not only valuing privately but also *justifying publicly* the arts on their own terms is a good idea, a damn good idea. But the inconvenient truth (thank you, Al) is that we are not strong enough to throw down the gauntlet. Such fortitude would come with: 1) enough people — a critical mass — who see clearly and value highly the interconnectedness of art to daily living, thinking, and doing; and 2) a hefty majority of arts educators K-university who have the will and capacity to clearly and inspirationally make those connections within the classroom and in every day commerce.

This is a Pipe: Valuing and Justifying the Arts and Arts Education on Their Own Terms

We must attend to the interconnectedness of art and design with daily life and other domains of learning. We must do this because the connections between art and life are genuine and because both art and life are made richer through the recognition and celebration of these connections. This is a matter of survival because those connections are intrinsic to art’s meaning and experience. We must also attend to these connections because of intense political pressure to find ways of linking arts programming to learning in other subjects and to socio-behavioral objectives. Those areas of connectivity are matters of health — or if taken too far, malady — because those connections are largely extrinsic to art’s meaning and experience.

Connectivity to daily life is already central to art and, certainly, to design; the balance is natural and elegant. If first we choose works of art that are rich in meaning and artistic tradition and then teach for deep understanding of those meanings and traditions, we will inevitably and enviably connect the essence of art with the essence of life in ways that few other subject areas can match. Our challenge is to champion proudly those practical and magical intersections of art with life, to speak it clearly and astutely. We must dare to say that there is more significant and much less significant art and design and, if we are to make clear our deep relevance to learning and life, we need to focus our teaching on that which is most worthy. We have so little time with our students. While it may be important to bridge the mundane with the exemplary, we need not tarry overly long in the commonplace.

With that in mind it is necessary to acknowledge the problematic nature of my implied assertion that we have a responsibility to keep central the “essence of art” in our teaching. This assertion presumes a particular valuing and view of art that some of our colleagues do not share for there is little agreement in the field of visual art and increasingly within visual arts education about what that essence is — not to mention whether or not the concept of “art” itself holds much meaning for 21st Century Americans. Hopefully, that dilemma will be resolved with time and distance from current theory trends.

Connectivity to social welfare programming and integration with other school subjects demands political vigilance and careful portioning to keep the scales from tipping so far as to spill art onto the floor. My proposition here is to subvert the system. Let us *within reason* whisper what they need to hear

but strongly and steadily beat the drum for the intrinsic qualities and contributions of art study and practice. At the same time we must do more than talk; we must hone ever more precisely and expressively our communication of the genuine overlays of art and life so that we might build that critical mass of the art educated we so acutely need. By all means let us make and cultivate connectivity among the various arts and humanities disciplines but let us keep central deep learning in the subject area for which we are responsible. It is not isolation we seek but intellectual coherency.

Obviously we do not control the marketing of arts' importance to education — far from it. For too long, we have allowed others to speak for us, in particular, publicly-funded professional arts advocates who habitually and deliberately conflate the outcomes of arts exposure with sustained study of an art form and who systematically dismiss the role of K-12 arts teachers in school-based arts instruction. Although we have not been engaged in the formation of the media message to the extent we ought to be, it is important to remember that we own a big chunk of the art education real estate and, consequently, have power *and responsibility*. One of our responsibilities as university researchers is to pay careful attention to the way advocates use our research findings. We are the authors of the studies that are used and sometimes misused in the packaging of funding- and influence-seeking arts advocacy campaigns. When we allow our work to be cited in service of the treacherous image that art does not merit being valued or studied on its own terms, we aid and abet in our own demise. When we remain silent while arts advocacy groups champion the contributions of non-profit arts institutions, artists, and after-school programming above and beyond the contributions of school-based arts instruction and arts teachers, we are complicit in eroding art's footing in our public schools. It is critical that we get these matters of justification and matters of values right so we don't end up propagating views — some very well-intentioned — that ultimately undermine the significance of the arts in the education scheme of things, a consequence we've come all too close to in our efforts to save the arts.

Every dimension of the art education enterprise is connected. It is the university that prepares future art educators — K-12 art specialists, teaching artists, art historians, art and cultural criticism professors, aestheticians, designers, architects — educators all. It is the university that provides a home for those who conduct research on teaching and learning. It is in college that many students first experience art as part of the general liberal arts curriculum and, if captured intellectually, will comprise the next generation of exhibition attendees, museum supporters, and art collectors. It is within the institutions of higher education you represent that the next generation of visual arts professionals is being cultivated. Art majors and non-art majors come to you, more or much less prepared, depending on the art education they have received pre-college. We are all in this together whether one is an elementary art teacher or university art professor, art college president or dean. Therefore, *I implore you to attend to the quality of your art teacher preparation programs.* Their success is your success; their failure your failure.

Another responsibility we have in caretaking our chunk of the art education real estate is to keep an eagle eye on academic grandstanding. Sadly, advancement within the university tenure system all but demands self-promotion over field-promotion. Ascetic selflessness aside, let us, at least, aim for "self-interest properly understood," as Tocqueville coined it. As we mastermind the latest, greatest theorem or proclaim yet another "paradigm shift" in arts pedagogy and practice, let us always keep forefront and center the survival and health of the field — the survival and health of the means to educate students K-university in and about the arts.

The resource paper on achievement and quality you read for this conference notes it is higher education's commitment to civilization building that secures the place of the arts in the core curricula. A half century ago, Jacque Barzun (1944) wrote:

[T]he very reason why art is worth teaching at all is that it gives men the best sense of how rich, how diverse, how miraculous are the expressions of the human spirit through the ages (167).

Who can question the arts' primacy as gemstones of human knowledge, expression, and achievement? Who can question the contribution of artistic modes of thinking and visioning to civilization building?

Is advocating for the arts on their own terms a good idea? Only if we can deliver what is promised. Only if we have the knowledge, skill, and *will* to help our students make and build on the rich, diverse, and miraculous connections between art and life. For that noble task we need to do something radical: We need to prize our work as educators as highly as our work as artists and researchers. Otherwise, it is time to re-examine wholly our basic beliefs about why art deserves to be included in the general curriculum, adjust our teaching goals and practices, and prepare to adapt to a fundamentally different form and function. Whichever path we choose it is restorative to know that the survival of art is not dependent on us, only the opportunity for large numbers of Americans to see art as being deeply relevant to their lives.

So, gentle ladies and gentlemen, please — put that in your pipe and smoke it.

Notes

1. *Putting the Arts in the Picture* (Rabin and Redmond, 2004), a report advocating the integration of the arts with other school subjects and community artists as the linchpin in successful arts integration programming, provides examples throughout its text of the decades-old strategic practice of dismissing the contributions or ignoring the role of K-12 arts teachers.
2. The National Endowment for the Arts' publication, *American Canvas* (1997) spells it out: K-12 arts education offers an "escape route" for a fiscally cornered nonprofit arts community by providing "immediate payoffs in the form of work for artists and art organizations" (49). Arts education policy researchers have reported on the blatant self-interest of NEA educational policies and funding practices since the late 1960s. *Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools* (Chapman, 1982) provided an early in-depth analysis of the federal government's systematic "de-schooling" of arts education.

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