

FATE in Review

VOLUME 31 • 2009-2010

FOUNDATIONS *in*
ART:
THEORY *and*
EDUCATION



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Studio, Lab, Study, and the World

Okwui Enwezor

Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President
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Okwui Enwezor is a critic, curator and editor. He currently serves as Dean of Academic Affairs and Senior Vice President at the San Francisco Art Institute and is the former artistic director of Documenta 11 and the second Johannesburg Biennale. He has curated numerous exhibitions including Gropius Bau, Berlin, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, P.S.1, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Tate Modern, Vancouver Art Gallery, Guggenheim Museum, Walker Art Center, Museum of Contemporary Art, Barcelona, Palais des Beaux Art, Brussels, among others. He is founder and editor of the critical art journal *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*.

The following article is based on Mr. Enwezor's keynote address at the FATE conference in Portland, Oregon, March, 2009.

In 2008, the global financial crisis brought to a halt the decade-long expansion of contemporary art. Across all metrics, the first decade of the 21st century was a truly transformational period in the field of art. It was a time during which the globalization of contemporary art spread beyond traditional Western centers of artistic production in Western Europe and the United States to the East in Russia and Ukraine and to Asia in China and India. These shifts in production brought new visibility to the consumption, collecting, and exhibiting of art, which produced an unparalleled growth in marketing and exhibitions.

The initial phase of globalization of art in the nineties was underpinned by a rise in the importance and proliferation of biennials as new discursive spaces for examining the geopolitical shifts of contemporary art beyond the institutional control and artistic legitimation of the Western art museum. This was followed by the explosion of art fairs and the role of auction houses in restructuring the economic index of artistic careers, leading to the unprecedented increase of prices of artworks. Finally, the new millennium witnessed a shift towards the visibility of the art academy, which increasingly served as a veritable farm system for the art gallery world. These factors had the effect of making the contemporary art system appear less a sphere for the production of artistic competence than for the manufacture of cultural capital and economic value, thus making the field of contemporary art more a scene where loose liberal market ideology was dominant, and the accomplishment of commodity and economic value the most salient measure of artistic competence. Contemporary art thus became increasingly aligned with the logic of luxury commodity.

The frenzied auctions of contemporary art throughout the decade saw new collectors emerge. These collectors, from Eastern European oligarchs and hedge fund barons to private equity potentates and fossil fuel magnates, vied for the highest media visibility as auction records were routinely broken. The auctions were marketed with a maximum of glitz, with lavish catalogues filled with brand new art propped up by pompous and cynical art historical texts. The formerly staid affair of auctions became a veritable spectacle. They took on a carnivalesque atmosphere, an instant reality television production. Even auctioneers became celebrities and taste makers, their visibility in proportion to the new cultural parvenus who paid colossal fortunes for works from the triumvirate of high kitsch: Hirst, Koons, and Murakami.

How did this state of affairs come to define the field of contemporary art during the first decade of the 21st century? Historically, contemporary art, it was believed, existed apart from the economic logic of capitalism. Conventional narratives represented it as a sphere of experimentation where critical aesthetic positions were constantly in open rebellion against different structures of modern standardization and the commodity form. Of course, some would argue that such a view of contemporary art owes its narrative to the strategies of the historical avant-gardes and the constant transformations of formal styles it fomented in the first quarter of the 20th century to the period of high modernism in the late sixties. By the seventies, a new social order put in place by the political and social upheaval brought about by decolonization, civil rights, and feminist movements shifted the narrative and also questioned the aesthetic stability of formal styles as the engine of emancipatory aesthetic forms. In the last decade, each of these moments, have become both commodified and commoditized. Today, the strategies of the avant-garde are constantly threatened with becoming a period style to be manipulated both by artists and their agents in the search for market share and cultural capital. The final hurrah of this interaction between markets and collectors, artists and agents, might be the desperate Damien Hirst *Beautiful Inside My Head* two-day auction at Sotheby's in London on September 14 and 15, 2008, which netted a reported 200 million dollars for the artist's clearance of work from his studio. The audacity of Hirst's gambit as economic catastrophe struck was lauded and loathed in equal measure. If there was any doubt that the art studio was a business with vital economic stakes in the balance, Hirst's auction left little illusion.

This brings us then to the position of the artist in the context of the changing systems of production and distribution of art. The relationship between the studio and financial markets, as well as the surrounding world against which putatively the most engaged and critical art defined itself, did become enmeshed. It informed the discursive interaction between the artistic and economic spheres to the mutual enjoyment of both. However, the deflation brought about by the global financial crisis may now be seen as a time of reckoning, a moment in which the dialectical convergence that governed the relationship between art and

money, aesthetic value and commodity value were put to the test. As the financial crisis transformed economic fortunes, leading to panic in markets and the plummeting of paper fortunes, we also observed how the fortunes of the art market tracked closely to the wreckage left in the wake of the great recession. The loss of velocity in art prices raised fears that collectors strapped for cash would dump their holdings in the market, leading to further depression of art prices. This fear not only paralleled the fate of the financial markets but also followed similar debates in the housing market about the over valuation of contemporary art as a result of too much money chasing fewer top grade works. Like the stock market and housing bubble, the contemporary art market and bullish estimations of auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christies became intertwined in the highly speculative nature of the valuation of art, leading to unprecedented distortions in the prices of many artists' works, from young and emerging talents to mid-career artists. The enthusiasm of markets and exuberant collectors, which had transformed contemporary art from its once exclusivist domain of institutional opacity to the realm of pop culture, may have unwittingly become a threat to it. Now, with the economic crisis, might the age of art fairs, biennials, and mega auctions be coming to an end? And if so, what will emerge in their wake? From what has been observed thus far, there is a correlation between the economic recession and a deceleration in the value of contemporary art. But my interest is not in prices but rather in the formal and critical attitude of artistic practice.

I began with the brief recall of the recession because it bears on how many of us will reflect on the state of the art field in which newly trained artists will be working in the coming decade. I suspect that the realignment of economic values and artistic value is already on the way. And this will affect the future of emerging artists in the global artistic sphere. I want now to reflect on the state of contemporary art today and its relationship to critical pedagogy and the field of art education. I will address two areas: first, I will focus on the cultural visibility, expansion and proliferation of the art school over the last two decades. I will examine, especially, the high premium placed on the MFA in recent years. Second, I shall explore what I argue are glimmers of an attempt to break with the over-professionalization of artistic production, a type of renunciatory effect, a return to order, which have all emerged in recent group exhibitions. The renunciatory paradigm – if it can be called that – can be seen as a form of historical return, in the sense that the forms of art making that subtend this return harkens back to usage and deployment of quotidian material, the shrinking scale of the work of art, the recovery of earlier strategies such as collage and assemblage in the work of younger artists. In this shift of aesthetic strategies, materials are recycled, remodeled, restitched, recombined, and meshed bringing to mind, for example, the early combines of Robert Rauschenberg and references to the work of artists like Dieter Roth and the Italian Arte Povera artists of the late sixties. Here, younger artists seem deeply invested in an archeology of postwar contemporary art. The current art seen in two of the exhibitions I will address has been spurred by a cross-section of emerging artists whose practices privilege humble, distressed materials over grandiose, rhetorically inflated, shop-ready commodity objects of auction houses. The work of this younger generation, rather than uncritically embrace the sleek, high-modernist productions fabricated in the manufactories of art stars like Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, and Takahashi Murakami, tends to withdraw into materials that are non-precious or derived from the remainders of the consumer economy. This implicit critique of consumerism and waste preceded the crash of the art market, and merits fuller consideration in our analysis of the relation between the studio as a factory floor and the laboratory as a space of a new kind of artistic activity. I shall return to this point.

I want, however, to address first, the third part of my quartet of sites of artistic production, namely the Study, in this case the art school. I want to argue that the art school is not only a place where would-be artists learn the trade of becoming artists. It is to my thinking more fundamentally a site of knowledge production, more than a place where art is taught and learned. In that sense, it is the context that gives rise to how knowledge is sharpened into critical and creative meaning.

But let's begin with the art school. Throughout the nineties, and late into this decade, the phenomenon of the art school as a conduit through which artistic talents emerge became globally noticeable. Over the years, the influence of various art schools —Goldsmiths College, Royal College of Art, Cal Arts, Yale School of Art, Columbia University School of Art, Dusseldorf Academy, Rijksakademie, Central Academy of Art Beijing, etc.—has risen and waned. With the rise in visibility, art schools also experienced what may be considered its own sort of inflated exuberance that corresponds to the period of the museum, biennial, art fair, and

auction market boom. This is obvious because the art school had become almost like a factory that produces the talent necessary to keep the art industry workshops supplied with its artisanal commodity objects. Thus, the art school, as we are all aware, became a subject of cultural and economic fascination. This fascination has elicited analytical interest beyond the traditional circuits of the art world and higher education, to the point where it gained the attention of curatorial reflection over the past decade. Along with this fascination is the increasing growth of art programs both within traditional independent art schools as well as universities. In 2001, the curator Paul Schimmel organized "Public Offerings," an exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art that explored the influence of several art schools internationally in producing artistic talent. Some of the schools whose artists were included were: Yale Art School, Royal College of Art, Goldsmiths College, Dusseldorf Academy, Cal Arts, UCLA, Art Center, etc. In the inimitable fashion of this type of curatorial reflection, there was, on another front in the examination of the new industry of the art school narrative "Academy Remix," a three-day symposium organized in 2005 by Daniel Birnbaum, the artistic director of the 53rd Venice Biennale and Rector of the Stadelshule in Frankfurt.

At the same time, the movie-going public was treated to Hollywood's entertaining but improbable spin on the lure and deprecations of the art academy in "Art School Confidential." Yet another reflection on the subject was the art-school-as-exhibition proposed by the three curators (Anton Vidokle, Mai Abu ElDahab, and Florian Waldvogel) of the unfortunately aborted Manifesta 6, which was to have been held in Cyprus in the summer of 2006. Vidokle, one of the curators of that failed endeavor, took the idea further in two other projects, the first of which, United Nations Plaza (2006) in Berlin, according to the press release described itself as "a temporary school." It went further, explaining its logic: "[s]tructured as a seminar/residency program in the city of Berlin, it will involve collaboration with approximately 30 artists, writers, theorists and a wide range of audiences for a period of one year. In the tradition of Free Universities, most of its events will be open to all those interested to take part." The second project, Night School at the New Museum, New York, also ran for a period of one year, from January 2008 to February 2009. Like its predecessor United Nations Plaza in Berlin, Night School was structured as a temporary school and, according to the press release, "Night School is an artist's project by Anton Vidokle in the form of a temporary school. A yearlong program of monthly seminars and workshops hosted at the New Museum and in its environs, Night School draws upon a group of local and international artists, writers, and theorists to conceptualize and conduct the program."

Both of these projects are subtended by the unrealized plans for Manifesta 6. In fact, the specter and failure of Manifesta 6 haunts the several propositions of the two Vidokle projects. The idea for the two projects seeks a radical potential for the art academy: to align pedagogy and critical thought with an alternative model of art education. Such a model envisions the teaching of art less as a site for the manufacture of objects and commodity but more as a place for the examination of ideas. Of course, Vidokle and his collaborators were aiming for a certain utopian model of the academy going back to the experiments of the Bauhaus and Black Mountain College, two short-lived pedagogical experiments, which paradoxically were informed by a highly reflexive formalist approach to art making.

Nevertheless, these explorations of the art school as a model of curatorial and artistic reflection were aimed at examining the possibility of the transformation of the field of art through the production of discursive circuits rather than the institutionalization of the atelier. Of the previous occasions, Manifesta 6, titled *Notes for an Art School*, went the furthest. Rather than continue the exhibition model of the previous five editions, the curators of the failed Manifesta 6 wanted to reorient the public's perception of art by taking us, as it were, "back to school." This return to art school sought to enervate the dialectic between art as entertainment (or, as Lars Bang Larsen suggested, the *experience economy*) with education as a ground for a more socially committed and political engagement.

In various presentations by the curators of Manifesta, a number of defunct or refunctioned legendary art schools like Black Mountain College and the Bauhaus were put forth as models worthy of reconsideration. Though they well knew why these experiments in "radical" education failed, they were nevertheless blindsided by the political reality of Nicosia, a city divided along

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sectarian Greek and Turkish lines, where the art-school-as-exhibition was supposed to take place. In a city separated by political, cultural, linguistic, and religious discord, as well as ancient rivalries whose origin had become dim over time, the curators reasoned, correctly, that art as visual entertainment was not what was needed but rather the meaning-making context in which art is produced, which, they reasoned, must be its pedagogical context. Their failed idea was the art school as a site for the production of knowledge. But failure in the case of Manifesta 6 was almost a kind of virtue, for the simple fact of the curators' abiding faith in a curatorial mission that was not oriented towards the manufacture of commodity objects but rather towards a broader field of discursive engagement built up to test the assumptions of art, pedagogy, and social discourse under the logic of capitalism.

While these reflections address a critical element of the debate about art schools, it strikes me that none of the many inquiries into the art school phenomenon has had quite the same impact as the article published in February 2004 by Daniel Pink in Harvard Business Review titled "The MFA is the New MBA." Once it became known, the article elicited considerable attention within the art school community, especially from admission and recruitment directors. The subtext of the article, or more accurately its premise, was that the esteem of the MFA as a professional degree was on the rise, and with business and industry paying attention, the author reasoned in his study that creative types wielding an MFA in their portfolios would soon achieve the same rarefied place in the economic ladder of success that was once the exclusive province of MBAs. Given the forum where this declaration was made (a respected business journal from the most respected university for the awarding of the MBA), this sudden elevation of the MFA from its once crepuscular habitation as one of the more useless (in the economic sense by which capitalism measures all things) advanced degrees was received by many with a sense of both alacrity and incredulity. For the first group, the notion of an MFA equating an MBA (mind you in economic, but not necessarily in cultural terms) proved to be a vindication of the business model of constant enrollment, growth, and expansion (a sort of zero sum game of numbers and budgetary stability that eluded Black Mountain College and the Bauhaus) which drives art education today in the U.S. For the more circumspect second group, especially those who take an overly dim view of consultancy-ready classification of artists as part of the "creative class," as Richard Florida may have supposed, the reign of cynicism immediately took over.

Given the buoyant state of the art economy then, at the very height of the now deflated bubble, the conclusion of Pink's article was received not without a sense of confirmation of the economic value of an MFA. No longer can we agonize over what these MFAs would do after graduation, for the proliferation of MFA programs both in the U.S. and elsewhere was perfectly in accord with Daniel Pink's article. At the height of the frothy art market, the idea of the "MFA as the new MBA" made perfect sense and may have struck a nerve. After all, artists were pulling in the kind of money that sometimes equaled that of bankers. In fact, the exponential boost in the price of contemporary art was seriously abetted by bankers and hedge fund managers, producing a serious conflation of the MFA and the MBA. Some may have tried to use this conflation to prove the point of the success of the art school. Dealers no longer needed to work with emerging artists by nurturing them slowly towards the maturation of their vision; instead, they were signing them right in the middle of their thesis exhibitions. Not only was the art being produced by barely-out-of-school MFAs fetching astounding prices, the buoyant economic environment in which the art world found itself expanded the market for even marginal artists, blurring the boundary between genuine artistic achievement and the speculative hype of the market.

However, rarely was the question asked about the dark irony nestled deep within the Harvard Business Review article, namely, if the MFA equals the MBA in economic worth, could it not, just as easily, be assumed that it also equals it in uselessness by dint of the glut of both degrees, and therefore lowers the overall economic value of both? While I do not want to reject outright the hypothesis that business and industry are taking notice of the MFA degree, the more relevant issue is one of measure: how does an MFA equal the MBA in comparative economic worth over time? How will this impact the future curriculum of art education? Can an MFA degree – in spite of the grueling work behind its completion – compete with the MBA but still depart philosophically from the pedagogy of the business school model? Still, what sort of education should an art school provide? Should it be only studio based or an interdisciplinary program encompassing more kinds of study and research beyond the image- and object-based production of most art students? What is the middle ground between object and research oriented practices? More importantly, why should

it not be a thorough combination of all of them?

Whatever the model, and the success of that model, one of the most important debates in terms of the state of the art school concerns what constitutes the emerging pedagogical and artistic models that schools should implement. Education, whatever its strict economic value, is about process rather than product; about building social, cultural, and intellectual capital, opening up sites of genuine inquiry and critical doubt. Creating these sites of inquiry requires rethinking the place of contemporary art and the role of the artist within the economy of artistic knowledge, not only during this downturn but also in the foreseeable future. Artistic greatness happens not because of the ready approval of the market, but in spite of it. This demands critical review especially concerning the exuberant creative cycles that occur in the studio as well as the experimental spaces where the work of art meets audiences and the world. In addition, it requires a deep investment in research and critical thinking, a grasp of historical and theoretical models, and the understanding of the changing cultural, economic, social, and political conditions in which art is made and shown today. All of the above demand opening up not only the so-called creative spaces but also constituting fertile spaces for thinking, making, and learning, in order to bring thought and action together.

Gaining an art education then is an investment in social agency. Its requirement is not only to reflect the internal creative conflicts that exist in the work of artists; it is also to think the work of art beyond the economic imperatives of success. In other words, art is not only a model of bringing together the coherence of complex modes of thinking and manifesting and embodying them in materials and forms; it is philosophically a mode of world-making and world-picturing. In this sense, the view of the art school today is about its new context, not just simply the beautiful utopian space of learning and discovery, nor simply the studio as the cosseted isolation room of the past. The context we face today is the global stage at large, what the critic and curator Ranjit Hoskote has called the "studio of studios." Here the task lies in how to reconcile the dramatic events of the global stage with the experimental, unruly, unpredictable, asymmetrical practices of contemporary art.

What seems crucial to me, in terms of this new context, lies in the relation between art and education as two kinds of a process of reaching awareness: self-agency and self-emancipation. John Stuart Mills would have likened these two kinds of awareness as the foundations for what he calls "positive liberty." Making art is one aspect of this idea. It involves taking chances, opening up a space in which the art student confronts his or her limits, presuppositions, etc. It is indeed to challenge the student to see the labor of making obscure knowledge immanent and palpable, as a kind of worlding of ideas. To my mind, most importantly, this seems an obvious way for the MFA to keep a step ahead of the MBA.

Finally, I want to end with brief comments on the intersection of the studio and the laboratory as two important zones of experimentation, as sites of not only making things, but of testing and working out ideas, fusing the temporal and the spatial. As I mentioned earlier, Dieter Roth's work embodies an influential artistic model of an open-ended relationship between the studio and the laboratory. His unfinished work *Large Table Ruin* (1970-1998) is a sculpture underpinned by two contradictory principles: massive agglomeration and structural disaggregation. A new generation of artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn have taken interest in this studio/laboratory model. Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* (2002) and *Musée Précaire Albinet* (2004), two sculptures comprising a series of individual but linked pavilions, employ the ideas of massive agglomeration and structural disaggregation that are evidenced in Roth's work. The two sprawling sculptures incorporate exhibition strategies, social and public sculpture, discursive forums, workshops, and pedagogy as the pivots of their continuous interrogation of artistic experimentation and social value. What is striking today is that other artists over the last five years have been developing new sites of reflection, what I would call scenes of struggle, within the shaping of a politics of form.

In this way, the question of a resistance politics is not merely an ideological one but rather a fundamental stance against the abuse of rhetoric and form. Recent curatorial efforts, such as the New Museum of Contemporary Art's three-part exhibition *Unmonumental*, have tried to reflect seriously on the forms of art that harbor deep skepticism about the intersection of artistic and

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commodity value of art. Yet, while that exhibition encapsulated a widespread skepticism by younger contemporary artists towards the inflated rhetoric of the monumental object, this form of art can sometimes prove contradictory, particularly when observed from the curatorial point of view of these objects' appearance in museums in which deflated, skeptical forms become rarefied objects, thus acquiring a gilded halo that makes them perversely attractive to the market. *Unmonumental's* attempt at negotiating this contradiction seemed a timely effort within the museum, to reflect the changing stakes of the artistic object, the field of contemporary art, and the deceleration of the market.

This exhibition came at a particularly opportune moment, a point of reflection and assessment, looking back, taking stock, sorting out, reanimating, and revivifying our engagement with the historical present. It offered an opportunity to set in motion some thoughts around the places and communities in which activities of art making are organized, the structures that support it, the new forms of world-making and world-picturing, as well as the social and professional occasions that bind them together. The communities of art and the types of art making coming out of a collaborative system between artists who share, if not a common concern in their work at least a common language, formed the conceptual foundation of *theanyspacewhatever*, an exhibition curated by Nancy Spector at the Guggenheim Museum in New York at the end of 2008. That exhibition brought together a group of artists who emerged in the nineties (Douglas Gordon, Liam Gillick, Carsten Holler, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Angela Bullock, Dominique Gonzalez-Foster, Pierre Huyghe, Phillipe Parreno, Maurizio Cattelan, and Jorge Pardo) and whose practices were defined by "relational aesthetics," a term used by the French critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud to describe the aesthetic of sociality and participation that form the foundation of the practices of the artists in this exhibition. Spector's curatorial approach did not aim to historicize the high points of this approach to art making. Rather, she framed them through the creation of a new narrative, one that dissociated the work from a thematized spectacle by using elliptical clusters of narratives and conceptual devices that were visual, textual, architectural, and graphic in composition. The show began by asking the question of where the space of form and the space of the public lie, and where the artistic self and social life converge to determine the strategies employed by the artists. Each of these questions, incidentally, was posed at the height of the economic debacle when the most admired art (in terms of the market) mirrored global finance's separation of reality from life. While *theanyspacewhatever* was not a retrospective in the traditional sense, it was an exhibition positioned to query, through retrospection, the nature of art and its place within the common culture. The exhibition's elegiac tone, the storytelling device it used, especially exemplified by the common phrases deployed by Douglas Gordon throughout the museum, did intuit something about the end of 2008 as a point in time marking a kind of closure, both for the group of artists in the exhibition and for that moment when our belief in the magic of capital turned to dust.

With these propositions in mind—both artistic and curatorial—it seems to me that over the last several years, a number of critical perspectives have generated fresh considerations of the field of contemporary art. These were attempts that sought to revive the distinctive tensions that exist between the borders of the studio, the laboratory, the school, the world, and art.

ARTICLE

Brainwork

Daniel Venne

Assistant Professor of Art

University of the District of Columbia

Naturally, an art instructor is most pleased with student work that demonstrates original ideas and innovative thinking, but it was an all-too-frequent lack of creative initiative among my students that led me to ponder the source of conceptual aptitude. I had given assignments intended to inspire the creation of new connections, characters, and concepts, and the students often returned with sad, clichéd, auto-traced pictures made from image files found through Google. I began to ask myself some questions: what makes a creative mind work effectively, and how can an instructor inspire courage in conceptual thinking? I used a pinch of creative thinking along with a handful of guile to persuade the art department at the University of the District of Columbia to allow me to design a “Visual Thinking” course, with the notion that it would be a class entirely devoted to kindling the imagination. I argued that the art program could potentially benefit from such a class, particularly if we could get students to begin challenging themselves, to work on ideas prior to considerations of technique, and to learn to avoid clichés. I envisioned critiques that could make me gasp with enthusiasm more frequently than I felt compelled to sigh with exasperation.

An unconventional text was needed. Happily, I stumbled across “Expect the Unexpected or You Won’t Find It” by Roger von Oech. The book explores the enigmas of the ancient oracles of Delphi interpreted with the intent of inspiring creative thinking. The oracles, abstract prophesies issued from the mouths of the priestesses of Apollo, are given new meaning for the artist. For example, the divination of “the barley-wine drink falls apart unless it is stirred” is presented as a call to continually stir the imagination by exploring different perspectives, stimulating the mind. It is a terrific book for examining the way the mind works (or doesn’t work) when confronted with challenges. Some of the core ideas the book stresses are the importance of facing creative challenges with courage, flexibility, personal distinction, and a nurturing of one’s powers of intuition.

In creative initiative, courage is paramount and therefore an important matter to explore in creative thinking courses. Courage is as important as commitment and enthusiasm—a creative mind has a penchant for challenge and experimentation. To inspire the students’ courage, I decided to have everyone give his or her name with a personal introduction at the start of the course. There was a catch; the students could only communicate visually, no verbal or sound cues were permitted. I hypothesized that this challenge would get the students not only to begin thinking in terms of signs and symbols, but it would also help them begin confronting any fears about sharing ideas or seeming foolish in front of a group. I assigned the students this challenge as their first homework, to give them plenty of time to think of a plan and to consider the possibilities. The following session was delightful: the solutions ranged from elaborate digitally projected visual displays to “Pictionary”-style drawings at the board, to mime performances. If any of the students happened to be shy, it wasn’t evident, and this may have been due to the general feeling of absurdity that provoked good-natured laughter. We had fun guessing the names of each presenter, with general success. One student began coughing heavily and thus was dubbed with the moniker “Phlegm” for the remainder of the session. As I sat in the rear of the room watching the various displays of courage, I was also reminded of how often as an instructor, *I also choose the known road or the strategy that has worked in the past*, rather than taking the path of uncertainty.

The first set of major assignments dealt with elements of visual literacy. Keeping with the loose spirit already established with the students, I presented several of the assignments as a form of play. Engaging in modified versions of “Family Feud” and “Password” were remarkably effective in explaining theories relating to signs and symbols. Deconstructing a cartoon was a terrific gateway to an understanding of gestalt principles.

Explaining the idea of visual metaphor was a bit trickier. I felt that understanding metaphor was crucial, since such understanding is at the root of symbolic expression. I could explain visual metaphor and I could show examples, but getting the students to comprehend the concept *and* generate original examples was a different matter. I created a list of disparate objects and concepts, separated into column “A” and column “B”. I asked the students to select one thing from each column and then make lists of comparisons between the two objects or ideas. For example, what do a politician and an alarm clock have in common? What are the commonalities between fog and a mattress? Once a substantial list was made, I then asked the students to make thumbnail sketches exploring their various combinations, to notice how the process of drawing allows for intriguing juxtapositions and

Brainwork

unexpected correlations. Most of the students “got it,” and their sketchbooks were filled with delightful drawings of mousetrap crime scenes and kabob-straddling witches. Still, this proved to be difficult for some students to grasp, or so it seemed by the limited or predictable solutions produced by some. I decided to move beyond the notebooks for the next attempt at mining metaphor.

I asked the students to find a piece of refuse, some disposed-of object with an intriguing color, shape, or texture. The students brought in trash objects ranging from computer parts to rusty cricket stakes. I asked them again to make lists—one list for things that could reasonably compare to the object’s form, and another list of things that could be compared to the object’s function. After a long brainstorming session, I then asked them to exchange objects with a peer, and to make a list for the borrowed object. I surmised that once the lists were compared, the students would have a better sense of when they were steering toward clichéd solutions, and also have a map of where they didn’t go mentally, where they were stumped but someone else continued. After they studied the lists, they were charged with transforming the object using one of the observations noted within their list. Therefore, the final transformation would contain some essence of metaphor, a resolution between the artifact and the new idea that would allow us to see the refuse in a way that perhaps we had not considered.

The completed projects showed some real brainwork: a tape measure transformed into a giraffe, a shaving brush turned into a priest, an Aztec god sired by a plug-in air freshener. The imagination at work was remarkable; however, a handful of prosaic, stumbling projects in the mix indicated that the understanding wasn’t complete for everyone.

I considered the meaning of metaphors. Part of the reason for the use of verbal metaphors was to explain topics that are difficult to approach, such as euphemism. This observation, combined with my desire to maintain the sense of play, led me to develop a group activity I hoped would encourage a more complete understanding of the principles and power of visual metaphor. We returned to games, in a more literal way. I asked the students to bring in board games: “Life,” “Sorry,” “Risk,” “Scrabble”—anything with a board, directions, pawns, and various game pieces. We broke into game groups, and I then presented the rules for the activity. I would give the group a theme, something that might be difficult to discuss or understand, and each group was instructed to use only the game board and game props to explain the topic visually. Could they silently comment on polygamy using “Twister?” Could “Candyland” be used to comment on bulimia? The students had five minutes to resolve the problem, arrange it, and have it set up as a presentation for evaluation.

Once they were assigned their topic, the students huddled together and began to sort through ideas and their limited materials. I enjoyed hearing their arguments about the proper way to express emotional volatility through “Jenga” or how contemporary social mores are better expressed through a spin-dial as opposed to dice. The final solutions brilliantly demonstrated the use of signs and symbols to explain abstract ideas. The “Scrabble” letter-rack became a park bench upon which sat the high-score “Z” colluding with her social inferior “blank” tile, as a gaggle of “A” tiles gossiped maliciously behind. A chessboard set the stage for the drama of the Capulets and the Montagues. On another table, a carload of pink and blue bohemians retreated from the road of “Life,” adjacent to the romantic drama of same-sex “Pick-up Sticks.” It turns out that there was no foul play on the “Clue” board—it was a suicide, prompted by the stress of being surrounded by too many difficult personalities. Many of the solutions were elegant and novel, demonstrating original problem-solving skills. Even when the dioramas were less than clear, the students’ thoughtful explanations and debate made it abundantly clear: they understood visual metaphor, and they were ready to work with it.

Working in groups stimulated creativity and the understanding of the core concepts discussed. It is important to remember how remarkably adept the students are at explaining principles to their classmates in the peer vernacular. The interaction also reinforced the importance of individual ideas giving way to a broader concept in order to satisfy the group dynamic. Often we are inclined to stick with an idea, even a mode of behavior, simply because it once worked in the past, or less simply, because our

ego requires that our decisions or contributions are held in regard. To the student with an abundance of ideas, flexibility may come more easily since there are potentially better ideas to follow. However, for many students (even the gifted), there may be a tendency to “stick the landing” in such a way that inhibits further movement of an idea. The group activities seemed to stimulate a healthy flexibility.

I wanted to spend some time delving into ways to explore one’s own psyche, history, and proclivities as avenues for expression. This was initially linked to the analysis of the Delphic oracle, “I searched into myself,” from Roger von Oech’s book. Students often create works with the intent of satisfying the aesthetic sensibilities of their instructors, or use other modes of inquiry and expression that are designed to satisfy an audience, rather than looking within. I wanted to create some challenges that would encourage the students to recognize the importance of their particular backgrounds and sensibilities, and, therefore, the merits of their own expression.

There were some obvious avenues to begin this process. The students kept a “dream journal” from which they culled images to create pictures to complement a class discussion on Surrealism. Exploration of early childhood memories led to a series of memory drawings, which was complimented by lively discussions about mnemonics. I provided some sensory mnemonics in the form of animal cookies and Play-Doh, which were effective for most of the American students, but some substitutions were necessary for the international students. During class discussions, I was sensitive to allowing open-ended speaking time with the students, in order to keep the atmosphere free, flexible and without judgment.

With the next assignment, I sought to challenge not only the immediate creative instinct, but also the ability to remain open to change. I gave each student three enigmatic photographs, chosen at random, with no apparent correlation. I asked them to write a story, to invent a scenario wherein all of the pictures fit, where some logical sense was made of the disparate images. They had a full hour to write before I asked them to present their solutions. For most students, this was an interesting approach to writing, and they were eager to share their impromptu stories. I then took some time to explain the dialectical approach to problem solving, emphasizing the importance of flexibility in the creative process. Each student was then given a fourth photograph, the “antithesis” to their “thesis,” and these new images were all potent with powerful, emotional suggestion: serpents, tombs, fortune tellers, and the like. I asked them to rewrite their story in such a way that the new antithetical photo would somehow be paramount to the story, and not merely an addendum. The students all responded to the challenge, producing new narratives that they then developed into illustrative images or storyboards.

This type of assignment seemed to work well for the students, evidenced by the pride demonstrated in having created meaningful scenarios, inventing characters, and developing images to which they felt some sense of connection and ownership. I liken this to the play instinct that most of us possessed in childhood, when we instinctively found fantastic figures in the shapes of clouds, or saw visions in the grain of wood, or witnessed unspeakable terrors coalescing in wallpaper patterns. I developed additional assignments to work with these instinctual pattern-seeking, meaning-making behaviors.

Focusing on story rather than on the fundamental design principles engaged the first-semester art students in a way that I believe complemented what they were learning in their Foundations courses. My personal approach to Foundations is to examine the various techniques of how we design, while the Visual Thinking course allowed the class to explore the theories of *why* we create.

There were several non-art majors taking the class to satisfy their general education art requirement, and they seemed to enjoy the different topics of discussion. Additionally, these students weren’t hampered by technical considerations as they might have been in a Drawing class or Foundations course. Having a diversity of majors in the mix provided for stimulating conversation and dynamic group activities and projects.

Brainwork

I presented a good deal of information relating to how the principles discussed in class related to fields outside of traditional art categories. The dream journaling quite naturally led to discussions about the theories of Freud and Jung, men notably influenced and stimulated by the visual. The exploration of metaphors was nicely complemented by Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, which is extraordinarily rich with connected visual metaphors. Class assignments concerning the evaluation of body language were augmented by discussions about research from the University of Nebraska, where medical students exposed to life drawing classes developed enhanced empathetic diagnostic skills. All of these interdisciplinary ideas helped to reinforce a crucial point—visual literacy and creative initiative are not, and should not be, lines of inquiry exclusive to visual artists and designers. I have to admit to feeling a particular joy in seeing a nursing student trump fellow classmates with some remarkable innovation, or a psychology student able to make the perfectly elegant contribution to a group project. These occurrences demystify the notions of creativity as some divine providence, and to reconstitute such activity within the more grounded realm of belief combined with work.

The issue of assessment is always tricky when evaluating ideas rather than technical output. I generally give credit for notebook assignments that demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and principles discussed in class. The open group critiques and discussions usually provide the satisfying emotional reactions to a great idea. While some students share their concepts and are met by questioning and suggestion, others are met with awed silence or even applause. A handy cliché concerning assessment: the proof is in the pudding.

The Visual Thinking course is now a part of the first-year curriculum for art and design students at the University of the District of Columbia. I have had the opportunity to receive feedback directly from the students about the class, and the response has been encouraging. Most students see a positive correlation between what they learn in Visual Thinking and what is presented in Foundations. Most students view both courses as the bedrock for their art education. The students leave the Visual Thinking course armed with a sketchbook full of ideas that they can later explore, reinvent, or make manifest in future classes. The critiques in advanced courses are getting stronger with charged ideas and challenging concepts. Generally. Naturally, not everyone "gets it." The clichés are perennials. I still occasionally sigh with exasperation, but now I think I can ask my students, "Where is the brainwork?" without sounding imperious.

ARTICLE

***A Case Study of Interdisciplinary Work:
Bridging the Gap Between Art and Writing***

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Looking to interdisciplinary teaching as a way to reinvigorate the college classroom is not a new idea, but it is one that is continually reinvented as our disciplines shift and change. Roland Barthes, theorist and scholar of cultural meaning making, wrote on the process of transitioning into interdisciplinary teaching and learning: "Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins effectively...when the solidarity of the old discipline breaks down—perhaps even violently, via the jolts of fashion—in the interests of a new object and a new language neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were to be brought peacefully together."¹ It is the "jolts" and the potential disruption to our fields and our classrooms that make seeking an interdisciplinary partnership and pedagogy intimidating even as we acknowledge its potential benefits, especially to foundation arts courses.

In part, the task of bringing writing into the studio classroom becomes daunting due to the same arguments that make teaching art so difficult. Instructing students in specific methods of working, asking them to define their art early on, or promoting too strict ideas of the correct ways to create can be counter-productive. Writing in studio courses often does just this. Students are asked to write artists' statements and, in the end, come out with formulaic speeches that dryly explain the work and leave nothing left to dig into. Rather than opening up their creative process and helping them to further engage with their work, these methods leave little room for further interpretation or study. Our goal then in incorporating writing into the foundation courses is to help students open up the possibilities of writing as part of their artistic practice so that they may develop it alongside their practice of making. Irit Rogoff explains in his essay, "What is a Theorist," "perhaps it has moved from response as affirmation of what you have said, which is what happens when someone quotes your work, to response perceived as the spur to make something as yet nonexistent."²

Considering the composition and rhetoric field's idea of Writing Across the Disciplines (a pedagogical frame embracing writing to learn and writing to communicate) can give us the kind of "jolt" and "new language" Barthes indicates necessary for new vision on how to effectively teach writing as a process that is meaningful in conjunction with the creation of new art pieces. It can give a framework for understanding the benefits of using knowledge and ideas from experts in the field of writing as a tool in foundation art courses. Here, we must stress the importance of the interdisciplinary aspect of this exchange. We are not merely encouraging the idea that studio instructors incorporate writing into their classrooms more extensively but that they do so with the help of those who have studied and are experts in the field of writing. Susan McLeod, a former Writing Center Director at the University of California Santa Barbara, explains, "Writing in the disciplines involves more than just learning genres and discourse conventions...It also involves learning the processes by which experts in the field develop and disseminate knowledge"³ Demystifying the relationship between visual and written texts and engaging students in meaning making processes used by professionals in their field was what our trial study sought to explore.

Portland State University's (PSU) Art Department is "dedicated to helping students understand and explore the ways that artists and their works function within a larger social context...[and] is a place where students from a variety of backgrounds interact, exchange ideas and cross conventional aesthetic boundaries."⁴ This mission requires the development of keen creative and critical thinking skills, those made accessible through various pedagogical methods, including weaving writing into the texture of foundation art teaching. Calling us to cross boundaries in order to teach students how to communicate about their art reflectively, analytically, and descriptively within the larger social context, the mission provided an ideal backdrop for our trial study on interdisciplinary work between the Art and English Departments.

How to Bridge the Gap Between Art and Writing

Within foundations art curricula, there is a distinct lack of substantial research on how writing can be practically implemented in the studio art classroom. The curriculum that is implemented is often impeded further by the pervasive tendency of students to dismiss writing as part of their art practice. Within foundations art courses, we find formal writing most often relegated to art history. Here, artists are taught how to analyze the work of others but not necessarily to speak critically about their own work and

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certainly not how to use it as part of their process of art making. Within studio courses, writing tends to be informal, often taking the form of written reflections or other loose critique. While helpful to their growth in future projects, these reflections are rarely refined pieces of writing and, on their own, are not enough to give the students the preparation they need to use writing as an extension of their art practice as they mature as artists. With these issues in mind, Zapoura Calvert, an adjunct writing professor in the PSU English Department, and I constructed a trial research study in my Art 115: 2-D Design course (Fall 2008 and Winter 2009). Our goal was to bring in various access points to writing throughout the term to determine attitudes toward writing as well as effectiveness of varying types of formal and informal writing on student thinking and art making during the term.

Our trial research in Art 115 focused on writing as a tool for critical thinking and learning, diving deeper into preliminary ideas or sketches, and connecting student work to the world with attention to the ways meaning is made in our texts and communities. Work on process-based reflective and analytical writing was developed to strengthen the written and oral skills needed by art students, who may often deal primarily with images but who ultimately must defend their work orally and in written form. Literacy theorist Laurie Edson states that relationally reading multiple kinds of texts (art, prose, music, etc.) "can unsettle some of the habitual and/or codified methods of analysis that have governed the mind and the eye."⁵

For this reason, we structured the course through defining the term "text" as inclusive of the written, visual, and auditory and using language from both the English and Art disciplines to expand student vocabularies and ways of thinking.

Our goals for students in this Art 115 course who would be using writing in conjunction with their art included the following:

- Self-analysis of student-produced texts (written and visual) through close observation and attention to the form and content
- Articulation of an argumentative or critical thesis statement through drafting and revision of proposals
- Process-based experimentation with freewriting and writing prepared to accompany students' final visual work
- Drawing upon visual and written exercises, techniques, and metaphors in order to understand the thinking process as a creative act, with personal and social implications
- Critique of the work of self and others with respect, constructive criticism, and concrete suggestions

Overview of Case Study

Forming a collaboration between the art and English departments at PSU for the Art 115 case study, Z. Calvert and I worked together to integrate writing into the course materials, working with and giving feedback to students to guide them in their process. Writing was incorporated into many of the projects, including a propaganda assignment asking students to work in groups of 2-3 and create a piece of visual and written propaganda relevant to today's political agenda, a relief print that incorporated a narrative into their work, and the final term-long project that was the focus of our study: an altered book. Students were asked to choose a book that would physically and thematically serve as a starting point and base for a final work of art. Students were given complete freedom in terms of working with the book as a physical object. Anchoring the writing and art making process in a specific book choice provided a basic thematic foundation for each student to grapple with as they experimented with written and visual forms through the term.

Step 1: Written Reflections

For every project, students were asked to evaluate their work with a description of their process; feedback from critique sessions; and strengths, weaknesses, and questions about the project. The format of these reflections was informal and served both as a means of assessing student progress in the course as well as providing them with the opportunity to engage actively with their process.

Step 2: Written Proposals

Throughout the term, students wrote three formal proposals for their final project, allowing them to consider it critically from

three distinct angles. Each one centered on a theme that was concurrently studied through class projects and assignments. Topics included (1) critical studies of the self, (2) political ideologies, and (3) a study of formal elements and principles of design.

To begin, Z. Calvert led the students through a workshop with guided exercises. Each proposal included a description of the concept driving the work, the materials and techniques they would use, and the research needed to realize the project. Both instructors worked one-on-one in the classroom and through online feedback given on student blog journals to create multiple forums for discussion of student writing; this enabled the students to develop their visual ideas and writing concurrently. After completing all three proposals, students were required to revise one as their final proposal. This allowed them to refine their concepts and begin their work with a clear and conscious direction.

Step 3: Final Statement

Ultimately, students wrote a final statement to be paired with their work. Drawing on ideas from the proposal, the statement focused primarily on the conceptual portions of the work. To give students a clearer idea of the roles writing can play, art critic Richard Speer gave a lecture on professional uses and presented a sampling of artist writings. By bringing the topic into a “real” world context, students deepened their understanding of the connection between art and writing.

Step 4: Peer Review

Before finishing their work, the students participated in a peer review session. In small groups, they presented their work and statements and answered a series of questions on both. Each student received two peer reviews to help him/her discover needed clarity or revisions. Having both visual and written work on hand allowed the students to look at both pieces to see how they connected and where they diverged.

In looking at the written and visual work, students were asked to consider the language used to describe each and determine its meaning if the disciplines were reversed. Creating connections between the two forms of thought helped to develop a deeper understanding of what elements and principles meant for a text (visual or written) and demonstrated the ways art and writing could develop together.

Step 5: Oral Presentation and Critique

During the final critique, students presented their work orally to the class giving a full explanation of their piece. Prepared with fully formed ideas, the students were able to describe their projects with clarity. After each presentation, the class gave positive feedback, constructive criticism, and asked questions regarding the work. The combination of writing and prior critiques prepared the students for these questions and allowed them to answer with poise and assurance.

Evaluating Case Study Outcomes

The outcomes and indications of this informal case study were evaluated through a series of qualitative surveys along with instructor observations and notes about the growth of student work throughout the process.

Intake Evaluation

Upon entering the class, students were asked if they had previously taken writing classes or used writing in conjunction with their art. Out of twenty-eight students, only ten answered affirmatively. Out of the remaining eight, several said they wrote rarely, only when taking notes, and never for pleasure. The overall attitudes towards writing suggested that it was not considered important in art making, critical thinking, or even as a professional skill. The idea of writing as a necessary skill for participating in the art discourse community was not at all a part of the students understanding of their field. When asked how they developed project ideas, only two students mentioned writing as part of their process. Many students declared that they simply “ponder” or wait for ideas to “appear.”

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Proposal Evaluation

Following the completion of class lectures, workshops, and project proposal assignments, students became more cognizant of the professional purposes writing might have. Still, students' ideas about writing remained limited to the projects specifically discussed in class. In addition, students continued to be unsure of the reasons writing should become part of their art practice and felt that the proposal writing process took away from time spent making the visual work. Despite these concerns, three-quarters of the students felt that submitting the proposals had an impact on their final concept.

Final Evaluation

End-of-term surveys regarding the course's use of writing produced a fairly even mix of students who felt the process was helpful and those who remained determined that the writing impeded their process. Yet, for the most part, project results spoke for themselves: students who had taken the process seriously ended the term with work that was far more developed than their initial ideas while those who engaged minimally tended to produce work that was less challenging and less conceptually driven. Of the thirteen students who offered suggestions for future classes, five students suggested less writing, while two requested more writing in specific categories (freewriting and statements).

Two Student Snapshots Indicating Positive Outcomes from Informal Case Study

A look at two individual snapshots of student work during the course of our study reveals some important development in student thinking about their art through the process of writing draft proposals. While the writing processes of each student revealed a range of growth and critical thinking, two snapshots, of Kevin and Sarah, serve as windows into the kinds of thinking stimulated through bringing process-based writing and self-analysis into this classroom.

Our first snapshot is of Kevin, a student who chose to use a copy of *The Time Machine* as the starting point for his altered book project. The following is an excerpt from Kevin's first proposal:

My overall goal is to create a well-balanced aesthetic piece of art that conveys the theme of the book...The book is about a time machine which travels into [sic] future, giving us a vision of a troubled future with the message that the current society needs to change its way, or suffer a horrifying future. I wanted to creatively convey that message because it is as compelling today as it was when it was written in 1895.

In his first proposal, the author does express some sense of his intention, to give "a vision of a troubled future with the message that the current society needs to change." However, his methods and specific focus are vague. His intentions are developing, but it is not yet clear what his message will be or how he will conceptualize it.

In Kevin's second proposal, he writes about his goal:

...to depict a book through a kinetic sculpture, as a representation of the current precarious, but momentous state of world affairs....House values are dropping, the country is in a political divide, people losing their jobs, and individuals are losing their retirement. What if we could see our future, or better yet, what if we could change the past?...I want to make moving gears and lights to represent a mechanical time machine. I would update it with more contemporary references...This proposal gave me new ideas for integration of political events into my artwork. It shows me that art can have more than intrinsic beauty; it can convey provocative messages as well.

Kevin's language in his second proposal is much more specific in his intention with the sculpture and his connections to specific contemporary political issues. This specificity demonstrates an understanding of context and connection to larger world issues. In addition, Kevin gives significant revealing commentary on the proposal writing process when he notes that the writing process itself gave him new ideas.

Our second student snapshot gives us insight into Sarah's process altering a course packet from a university course she had taken during a previous term. In Sarah's first proposal, she describes her developing concept:

I am an artist because I like creating art...I am NOT an intellectual, and my artwork does not try to communicate anything besides aesthetics. The world of motivated artwork is extremely alien to me...I want to paint, draw and design without being expected to express avant-garde statements. Even if I eventually decided to create my art with a greater purpose, would I have as much fun with it? I just want to question if that's necessary to be a good artist...My initial idea was to cut out a little boy carrying paintbrushes in the center of my altered book, surrounded by several adult artists focusing intently on their work. The little boy represents an artist that enjoys his work, but draws with no purpose. Likewise, the adults are representations of motivated artists. They draw to express their viewpoints, and their work contains forms of social inquiry, political criticism, or propaganda.

In her first proposal, Sarah's basic concept is developing but still vague at this point. Here, we see a student grappling with questions about meaning and context in relation to her art. While the questions raised are interesting, the student here is stuck at the surface level.

With her second proposal, Sarah's writing develops simultaneously with her ideas about the final altered book project:

I will...focus on essays related to art censorship...Both communities and governments have restricted artistic content in the past, and may continue to do so in the future. Even if the artwork is controversial, banning or restricting it is a blatant violation of freedom of expression...My altered book will address different issues of art censorship...I want to make the iconography ironic and slightly humorous...I will use the three wise monkeys to hint at society's unwillingness to face objectionable or controversial content...I will argue that censorship supporters should develop a greater tolerance to "objectionable" art.

Here, she has moved from a vague idea questioning the need for any motivation in art at all to a concrete framework that approaches her work of art as a method of engaging in a larger debate about censorship. In addition, she begins to incorporate ideas about specific symbolism that could be used throughout her work. This dramatic shift demonstrates the student's ability to explore potential connections between her art and the larger world, and the result is a proposal that has much more depth and allows room for further meaning making.

In her final proposal, Sarah demonstrates a much more complex understanding of the meaning she seeks to create through her altered book piece:

I find censorship particularly compelling because I strongly object to its use. Yet I also want to explore why societies find it necessary to censor art...I will start the book by evaluating the ideas George Moss has presented throughout his essay, 'Beauty without Sensuality'. I will particularly focus on Moss's insightful theory that societies often regard immoral artworks as a direct attack on their moral values and harmonious lifestyle. On the first page, I will paint a nude man emerging from a large picture frame while cocking a rifle. A 1950's-esque group of young women in front of the picture frame will gasp in shock at the sight. The interaction between the man and the group of women illustrates the perceived assault that immoral artwork is making on society...Before I start the project, I will read the censorship-related essays a final time to ensure perfect comprehension. Then I will revise and expand my approach with external research, because I made several assumptions during the design stage to match the concepts in my text...Depending on the answers I find, I may need to revise the details of my altered book.

In this final revision, Sarah takes her ideas from her second proposal to the next level. She sets the context showing a clear connection between a broader cultural issue and her work on her altered book project and the student's ability to use her art as a place for exploring meaning. Sarah is then very clear about the details of her project and both the image that she will use and her intention behind that image's use is solid here. Finally, Sarah includes an important detail about the way research/writing has been integrated into her "making" process. She notes that "I will revise and expand my approach with external research, because I made several assumptions during the design stage to match the concepts in my text... Depending on the answers I find, I may need to revise the details of my altered book." If the intention of Writing Across the Disciplines is to demonstrate for students the ways that writing can function as a way of thinking and as a way of entering a discourse community, this student has shown us

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that the goal was met on some level. Her research and her making are in dialogue with her research and writing about her art.

Challenges Presented by the Informal Case Study

While our informal surveys and analysis of student reflective writing produced many interesting results that inspire us to develop our writing and art making exercises further, there were also challenges presented. One challenge was that many students did not fully grasp the connection between the writing and art making, and some students remained opposed to incorporating writing into the art making process throughout the term. From the instructor perspective, limited time constraints made it difficult to teach fundamental writing and course skills. Without a formal co-teaching arrangement between departments, creating cross-over was difficult. In addition, a more formal and scientifically-based study on possibilities of the connection between the art and writing disciplines would be more possible with a formal instructor partnership.

Recommendations

Ultimately, we found that the incorporation of attention to the writing process into foundation courses must be embedded throughout an entire foundations curriculum. The concept that writing is not a part of art making has long been entrenched in art curricula and must be changed on this fundamental level if we are to expect students to engage with their own work, rather than the often emphasized engagement with the work of others in art history curricula, on a critical level. In order to accomplish this, students must begin to see writing as an extension of their work, use it as a way to develop clear connections between what they see and what they create, and become fluent in transferring their ideas between visual and written forms.

While incorporating writing assignments into foundation courses is a good beginning, it becomes too much to expect professors within the art department to be experts in every field. With limited resources and a full set of skills that need to be taught, attempting simultaneously to integrate an additional skill set will prove taxing for many instructors. In the university system, we have access to professionals across the disciplines. We recommend that departments form formal co-teaching partnerships in order to take advantage of each other's expertise, to share that knowledge effectively with the students, and to continue to develop conversations across the disciplines. Developing at least one co-taught course at each level of study would allow the ground-work of writing and art to be laid soundly so that other courses could integrate it more seamlessly without also having to teach fundamental skills and ideology surrounding the combined disciplines.

1 Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, Trans. Stephen Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 155.

2 Irit Rogoff, "What is a Theorist," *The State of Art Criticism*, ed. James Elkins, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 106-107.

3 Susan McLeod, "The Pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum," *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, eds. Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 157.

4 Portland State University, "Art Department Homepage," *Portland State University*, 30 January 2009, <<http://www.pdx.edu/art>>.

5 Laurie Edson, *Reading Relationally: Postmodern Perspectives on Literature and Art*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 2.

ARTICLE

***Advanced Placement Studio Art and the
Contested Territory of College Art Foundations***

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Educational Testing Service

Advanced Placement Studio Art and the Contested Territory of College Art Foundations

Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art is an influential force in secondary art education as evidenced by over 35,000 portfolios submitted for review in 2009¹. AP Studio art is designed to emulate college-level art courses. Students take the course with the expectation that they might qualify for advanced placement and college credit. The clearly defined portfolio requirements and the prestige of the AP program can be used to generate support for high school art programs and create opportunities for large numbers of students to become engaged with art learning. The AP Studio Art program also shapes student art-making, primarily through the constraints of the portfolio assessment. The character of these constraints and whether they enable desirable outcomes are worth considering in the context of recurring questions about what constitutes foundational knowledge in studio art. AP Studio Art is an important but often overlooked component of college art foundations that provides opportunities for secondary and post-secondary collaboration and defines important points of common interest for college and high school educators.

The Marginal Status of Art Education

Art education in the United States is characterized by an ongoing struggle to keep the development of personal artistry and knowledge about art as viable possibilities in schools². High school art education is a particularly contested area, crisscrossed by misconceptions about adolescent artistry and troubling educational policy that marginalizes art learning³. The inordinate focus on standardized testing in some subjects has moved other subjects, including art, to the margins of secondary programs. Misconceptions about artistry and artistic assessment, as well as a host of other factors, have contributed to art's marginal status. This is not a problem if the knowledge and skills associated with art education are of little consequence. However, there is a prodigious body of literature that describes the value of learning about and making art that indicates otherwise. The habits of mind associated with artistry are critical in a world in which many routine tasks are performed by computers or machines. Skills in collaboration, solving problems in ambiguous situations, innovation, and the ability to integrate and work across disciplines are becoming increasingly important.⁴ Art offers a balance and richness to the school curriculum by creating opportunities for learning that is divergent and imaginative.⁵ As schools grow more diverse and society becomes ever more embattled by cultural conflicts, it is vital that students have opportunities to gain understanding and compassion toward those who are different. Art is a particularly effective way to develop multicultural understanding, community, and intercultural competence.⁶ Art education can transform school learning environments and connect children to important social and ecological issues.⁷ Art education can enhance the development of cognitive, perceptual, and ethical skills, and its neglect is a problem for K-12 education and perhaps for post-secondary education as well.

The Response of AP Studio Art

The AP Studio Art program counters the erosion of high school art curricula by creating opportunities for large numbers of students to be engaged with rigorous art learning. The AP program can be an effective means to advocate for high school art programs because AP participation is highly valued by parents, school leaders, and colleges.⁸ The program has created significant support for secondary art education by establishing a college endorsed standard of artistic performance certified by an annual assessment. Although the degree to which colleges accept AP courses for credit or advanced placement varies, participation in AP courses is viewed favorably by colleges, and successful performance in AP courses correlates positively with success in college courses.⁹ The College Board's endorsement of AP Studio art as a substantial, college level experience is powerful encouragement for high schools to support their art programs. AP Studio Art also prepares students for college art programs and engages them with foundational art experiences. The quality and the content of these courses as well as the character of the AP assessment are important issues for university faculty involved with foundations programs since they directly influence the preparation of their future students.

Initially established for a small, elite group of students, the College Board has made a concerted effort to expand opportunities for students to engage in AP courses. Although questions of access remain, restricted right of entry is not part of the College Board's policy¹⁰. In some high schools, the AP Studio Art course is offered to an elite handful of "gifted" students who plan to attend

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college art programs or art schools. However, the growth of the program suggests that many students who are not in this elite category are also taking these courses. These schools recruit students who might not otherwise enroll in AP courses by reducing enrollment barriers and preparing students within a broad array of courses before their junior or senior years. While equitable access remains a challenge, initiatives such as College Board start up grants designed to give traditionally underrepresented students access to AP courses have involved significantly more students in the program. The number of portfolio submissions has grown from 4,105 in 1990 to over 35,000 in 2009. The diverse content of the AP portfolios also indicates that students who are taking the course have a wide variety of experience and artistic backgrounds. In many schools, the course is offered to a range of students far beyond those who expect to enroll in college art programs. The democratization of the opportunity for students to have rigorous school experiences in the visual arts is one of the most significant aspects of the program's success.

The AP program began with collaboration between high school and college faculty and continues this collaboration through its development and assessment process. The scoring guides used to evaluate the portfolios grew out of direct interactions among a group of expert AP and college teachers. The critical factor in writing the scoring guides was, and remains, finding points of agreement within the vast domain of art—finding ways to recognize the degree to which a student's work is or isn't at the same level that would be expected of a first-year college art student. In its reliance on professional interaction and the drawing together of a disparate group of people, the process of developing scoring guides mirrors what takes place at the Reading. The annual Reading brings high school and college teachers together to review the work of students. At the Reading, AP teachers find out how their college-level colleagues think about drawing and design; college faculty find out what is happening in high school art education, as well as how their high school counterparts view teaching and art. These collaborative discussions create a rare and valuable opportunity to connect college level programs to secondary programs and to connect college level programs to each other.

The College Board creates course descriptions, offers in-service professional development and trains Readers to evaluate the portfolios. The requirements for each portfolio section are intentionally broad and flexible and few if any assumptions are made about how a particular teacher will best negotiate the requirements. The portfolio structure does, of course, affect curriculum. The most obvious influence is suggested by the names of the three portfolios—Drawing, 2-D Design, and 3-D Design. Within each of the three portfolios, the requirements for breadth and concentration also influence what happens in the classroom. A concentration by its nature calls for time, thought, and, one hopes, development. Breadth requires that teachers facilitate a range of experiences in the relevant discipline. In spite of these constraints, there is no single specified curriculum; rather, there is encouragement for teachers to exercise their creativity. The AP Studio Art portfolios involve relatively unstructured tasks, and the program's philosophy is to allow students and teachers the freedom in solving each section of the portfolio.¹¹ The deliberate openness of the portfolio framework reflects the recognition that just as there is no single right answer to an art problem, there is no single right way to teach art. The values that are linked to the AP portfolios at the most basic level are a regard for concept, composition and execution as defined in the course descriptions and scoring rubrics. The program emphasizes the production of visual artifacts and a commitment to establishing excellence in student artistry, where excellence is defined as college foundation level work.

The AP Portfolio Assessment

The AP Studio Art program shapes student art-making through the constraints of the portfolio assessment. The character of these constraints and whether they enable desirable outcomes are worth considering in the context of recurring questions about what constitutes college level foundational knowledge in studio art. The AP portfolio defines quality performance in terms of rigorously defined sets of criteria that allow for great flexibility and a wide range of solutions. These standards for performance are tied to the expectations of college level foundation courses and are generated by ongoing dialogue among assessment specialists, college teachers, and high school teachers. For example, the decision to retire the General portfolio and introduce the two design portfolios was based on a curriculum survey of college foundation programs conducted in 1998. In 2005, a related

survey confirmed the overall match between the requirements for the portfolios and the concerns of the respondents' programs. The mission of the studio art program has always been to provide motivated high school students with the opportunity to do college-level work and to earn college credit or placement beyond the relevant foundation-level course.

The evaluation of the portfolios also tests the values that the AP Studio Art program espouses and its broad curricular demands. "Values" does not mean that there are hidden criteria by which the work is evaluated, e.g., the remarkably resilient myth that experimental work is frowned upon in AP. Keeping the scoring guidelines free of gender or ethnic bias continues to be matters of consideration, and discussions about how to evaluate emerging art forms including photography and digital art have been ongoing¹². In July, students receive an AP grade from 1 to 5 that represents the final evaluation of their portfolios. This number will be considered by college art departments for possible credit or advanced placement within their program. Although the scoring rubric itself allows for a broad range of work to be considered, reducing a portfolio to a single score does impose limitations on the kind of information that students ultimately receive. For example, they do not receive an explanation of the various sub-scores or a commentary from the Readers about their work. For high school teachers, the value of the portfolio is in the focus that an external evaluation brings to the art program rather than the final number. The AP evaluation helps give art programs credibility in schools that are obsessed with standardized tests in "academic" subjects. The final evaluation also defines the value of the student's high school work in the context of college level art. It is the endorsement by college educators that gives the portfolio its influence.

AP Studio Art and Art Education Ideology

In spite of its benefits, a large-scale assessment such as the AP portfolio runs the risk of breaking down the complex relationships among process, context, and culture into discrete and formalist parts, particularly when the evaluation focuses on the artifacts of student production taken out of context. It has been argued that authentic assessment is impossible without considering curriculum, teaching, and assessment as part of an inseparable relational dynamic.¹³ Can an evaluation that removes artistic production from the context of its creation properly support the complexities of artistic practice and ways of knowing? The AP portfolio tries to do this by creating relatively unstructured tasks that encompass a wide variety of media and conceptual approaches and by allowing students freedom in solving each section of the portfolio. The concentration section of the portfolio in particular emphasizes individual investigation of ideas and relationships between form and meaning. The names of the three portfolios—Drawing, 2-D Design, and 3-D Design emphasize the portfolio's orientation toward formalist notions of art-making, although all sections of the portfolio are evaluated on the basis of the students' concepts or visual thinking. The scoring rubrics for the portfolio also accentuate the elements and principles of design. The assessment does not attempt to evaluate students' ability to understand or interpret artwork, except as that is implicit in their own work. How art criticism or art theory may be integrated into art foundations remains an important question for AP teachers. The tension between the conceptual and formal aspects of artistry highlights another ideological challenge facing both the AP and foundation programs.

AP Studio Art does not always fit harmoniously into art education ideology and emerging ideas about foundational content. The requirements for the portfolios are based on periodic curriculum surveys of foundation programs in colleges, universities and art schools, most recently from 2005. However, what constitutes core or foundation courses at the college level is being questioned in the light of contemporary art practices.¹⁴ There is dissonance between the formalist criteria that many college-level art programs and the AP Portfolio consider of primary importance and more conceptual, postmodern approaches to curriculum. For example, Olivia Gude challenges the whole notion of the elements and principles of design as guiding constraints for art education. She argues that art should be based on the diverse practices of contemporary art-making, and should emphasize postmodern concepts such as appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualization, layering, and hybridity.¹⁵ Others have made the case that formalist approaches to art ignore the complex contexts surrounding art and visual culture. Contemporary artists often engage in transdisciplinary explorations of ideas and media that extend beyond formal concerns. Some college art foundation programs are changing the formalist orientation derived from Bauhaus principles and organizing courses that may reflect more accurately the character of contemporary art and discourse.¹⁶ These changes suggest there is a need to question what skills in art are

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foundational and for the College Board to maintain an ongoing dialogue with college educators about the content of foundations programs.

The AP course also emphasizes individual production. Group or collaborative projects cannot be included in the portfolio. The evaluation only considers the artifacts created by the students, independent of what else they might know about art. Social, relational and dialogic concerns that are increasingly relevant to contemporary artists are difficult to document in a portfolio that focuses on individual work. Similarly, projects that emphasize interaction with the audience would be difficult to document within the existing criteria for the AP Portfolio and would require new types of documentation and new forms of evaluation. This kind of work reflects a relational or dialogic aesthetic that places more emphasis on socially engaged art-making than on formal, universal principles of design.¹⁷ In this context, art-making is concerned with critical theory, culture, politics, activism, and social or ecological issues. This approach mirrors the work of contemporary artists who focus on issues of importance to human and natural communities and often incorporate other disciplines using emerging technology. These ideological challenges to the content of college art foundations, and in turn, secondary art education are important issues for the future of the AP Studio Art program and suggest the need for continued dialogue among college and secondary educators and continued development of both the content of the courses and how work is evaluated. Although the remnants of Bauhaus-inspired art fundamentals may seem inconsistent with postmodern practices, many college foundation programs continue to emphasize formalist approaches. Perhaps there is a need to balance the conceptual, political, ideological, relational, cultural, and critical aspects of art with the acquisition of the more traditional skills and vocabularies of art used by many designers, illustrators, fashion photographers, and artists.¹⁸

Conclusion

Educational reform policy that emphasizes technocratic rationality and high stakes testing accountability can diminish the importance of art learning in schools. Misconceptions about art assessment and the artistic potential of adolescents contribute to the marginal status of art education, as do an array of other forces in education. The College Board, through the Advanced Placement program, has established educational policies that support high school art teachers, equitable access to its programs, collaboration among college and secondary faculty, and curricula that are analogous with college foundation courses. The AP assessment adds credibility to art learning by providing a reliable annual evaluation of high school artwork. Its substantive focus on creating and understanding art for its intrinsic value is a positive influence on the field's identity and security. The AP Studio Art program provides a significant response to the marginalization of art learning by giving art the legitimacy of college level rigor and support.

AP Studio Art is intended to be an important barometer of what is valued by college art programs. Consequently, it shapes secondary teaching and curriculum in significant ways. The AP Portfolio also illuminates ideological challenges to the content of college art foundations. Its emphasis on formalist and individual approaches to art-making has invited questions about whether the kind of artistry it encourages are relevant to the contemporary art maker. Concerns about the purposes and content of art education have created lively discussions about what constitutes foundational knowledge in the context of contemporary art-making practices. Like their college counterparts, AP Studio Art teachers address the needs of a wide range of students with varying experience and interests. In spite of the constraints of the AP assessment, including its de-contextualized focus on art production, its emphasis on individualized learning, and the prominence of the formal elements of art-making, it is evident from the enormous range of work produced by AP students that the program does enable a generous flowering of the artistic potential of adolescents. It is significant that the program can also create a democratization of the opportunity for students to get involved with what art offers. A question for future of the program is: What can be appropriately added at the foundations level so that students' experiences with art and art-making can be enlarged to encompass some of the concerns of the contemporary artist?

The curriculum, assessment, teacher development, and advocacy associated with the AP Studio Art Program supports high

school art teachers and collaboration among college and secondary faculty. The process of developing AP courses and evaluating student work creates a vital link between secondary and college level art programs. College art programs should be interested in the health of K-12 art education, and the AP Program provides one area where these interests meet. The ideological questions of foundational knowledge for the postmodern artist are rich and complex and suggest many possibilities for weaving concept and idea into a hybrid mix of media and artistic conventions. In contemporary art practice, modernist and post-modernist approaches to art-making exist side by side and influence each other in significant ways. Rather than attempting to create an artificial distinction between formal elements of art-making and postmodern approaches, it may be useful to balance conceptual fluency with the acquisition of formal artistic conventions used by many artists in the field. For example, skill within a medium and the ability use a visual language can enhance a concept that reaches beyond formalistic concerns. The changing character of college art foundations and the evolving landscape of contemporary art suggest that continual review and revision of foundations programs are needed. How college art programs and AP Studio Art negotiate these changes has important implications for the character of secondary art education, foundations curricula, and the relationship between secondary and college art programs.

- 1 Material for this article was gathered from Alice Sims-Gunzenhauser's work as primary test specialist for AP Studio Art since 1983. Mark Graham has worked with the implementation of Advanced Placement Art programs as a teacher and art administrator. He is also a reader for the College Board. The number of portfolios submitted in 2009 is cited from the College Board, *AP Statistical Tables 2008-2009*, p. 8.
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ARTICLE

***Changing the Sheets: An Approach for Integrating
Non-Linear Learning into Art Appreciation Texts***

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Learning about art can be a rich experience. The immediate impact of the visual image, combined with our understanding of the mechanics and media, the context in which the work has been created, personal associations that we make from our own life experiences, and the ideas communicated by the work are all integrated into an assemblage of understanding. This course is intended to give a student with little or no previous formal knowledge of art the tools to knowledgeably evaluate art as it is experienced in everyday life. Because this may be the only art class that large numbers of students take during their entire college career, art appreciation is important for cultivating an understanding of and support for art among the larger general population.

An art appreciation textbook may be the only item written about art that the average college graduate has ever owned, even if only for a brief time. Art appreciation texts have helped enrich art learning, but have done so in a narrow way that relies on controlling the flow of information. These books tend to be written in a standard linear fashion using a beginning, middle, and end. This standard book form relies heavily on the reader's continuous attention so that concepts can be progressively developed. One must understand one integral concept so that the next makes sense, and so on. Our group, Ralph Larmann, Debra DeWitte, and Kathryn Shields, has been working on a text that may expand the transfer of knowledge and further enhance art textbook learning.

The most widely used art appreciation texts (*Living with Art*, *Artforms*, *Understanding Art*) follow a three-part structure that relays the story of art in approximately 20 chapters. These leading texts generally follow this format:

Beginning: Language of Art and Art Terms which covers terminology and a short introduction to the Elements of Art and the Principles of Design

Middle: The Media used by Artists which covers the materials, techniques, and media classifications

End: The History of Art which introduces major artworks and the context in which they were created.

This sequence is logical, sequential, and fits well with standard text structures. The student is expected to learn all the elements and principles of art first, then about media, then about art history. This type of text is based on the assumption that a student needs to know all attributes of art language before they encounter art media, and only then can a student fully comprehend the nuances of art history. The first two sections are essentially a foundation for the latter. This structure can be illustrated in a flowchart. (Fig.1)

This kind of structure relies on limited parameters and expected outcomes. If new elements are introduced, they must be assimilated and incorporated in a way that fits the conceptual structure. This format is narrow, orderly, and rigid.

Like stories used to carry knowledge from generation to generation, textbooks were created to follow the same linear path as the spoken word. The best-selling art appreciation texts, *Living with Art* (1985), *Artforms* (1985), and *Understanding Art* (1986), have each used this format for over 25 years, predating widespread use of the personal computer.

Alternatives to the flowchart model of art instruction appeared about 65 years ago when Vannevar Bush, an early pioneer in computing, theorized that learning is enhanced when the reader can

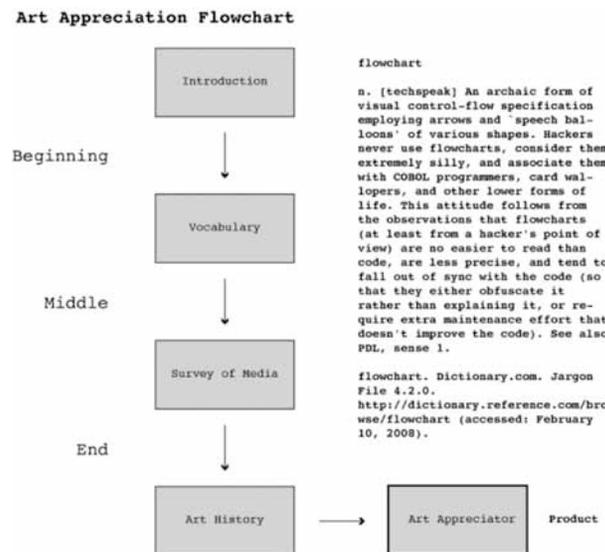


Figure 1
 A graphic example of a flow chart as it relates to art appreciation textbook structure and a jargon definition of flow chart from an online dictionary.

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Figure 2
Turner Prize winner Jeremy Deller’s image *History of the World* illustrates the concept of non-linear thinking in a mind mapping-like artwork.

Figure 3
This diagram lays out all the modular chapters in the text. Instructors can reorient the order of presentation since each chapter is modular and can stand alone.

“hyperlink” to concepts as they read the text rather than follow the rigid structure of the presentation. Some recent illustrations of this idea resemble mind mapping, a planning process that is non-linear. It does not rely on a rigid conceptual structure, is more intuitive, and can be modified easily if new information is introduced. Because mind mapping is not tied to a linear structure, it allows for multiple associations and can draw from many sources of information at the same time. Mind mapping works in a way that is similar to the Internet. When one uses a hyperlink to access associated information it enhances the flow of knowledge, even though it does not promote a linear progression. (Fig.2)

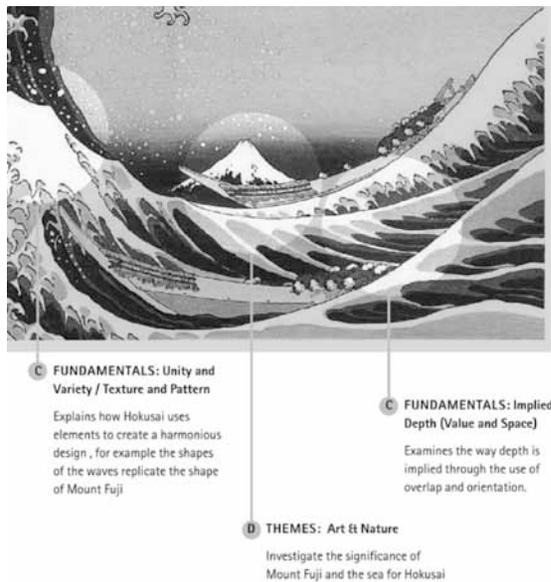
College students who were born after 1990 have grown up alongside the development of the Internet, and they are uniquely able to comprehend and absorb information that is presented from disparate media sources. They feel comfortable in an environment of interactivity and intuitive learning. Simultaneous layers of information, rather than a linear stream of data, can be used to enrich their educational experience. The student gleans richer, more specific information, in a more efficient fashion. We need to provide instructional materials that function in ways that better fit the learning habits of this generation rather than compelling them to adhere to a flowchart structure.

Our team of authors are art educators who use online learning materials in the teaching of art appreciation. Our idea is to create a text that can be compartmentalized into standalone chapters, using cross-referencing to modify the existing textbook format. By efficiently using approximately forty short chapters, rather than the traditional long twenty, we present information in a way that complements the learning patterns of this generation of college students. Our art appreciation textbook design modifies the traditional model so that information is presented in a way that is more like the World Wide Web.

Introduction	Fundamentals	Media	History	Themes
What is art?	2-D Basics	Drawing	Prehistory to Gothic	Community
Where is art?	3-D Basics	Painting	Ancient American	Spirituality
Why do we study art?	Implied Depth	Printmaking	Renaissance	Life Cycle
How do we study art?	Color	Photography and Film	Arts of Asia	Nature
Introduction to elements and principles	Time and Motion	Performance and Alternatives	17 th -19 th Century Western Art	Science
Introduction to art media	Unity, Variety, and Balance	Graphic Design	Africa and Oceania	Illusion
Introduction to art history and criticism	Scale and Proportion	Design for Personal Use	Middle East	Ruling Class
The role of art in society	Emphasis and Focal Point	Sculpture	Early 20 th Century	War
How does this book help us to study art?	Rhythm and Pattern	Functional Art	Late 20 th Century	Social Protest
Gateway images	Style and Content	Architecture	American Art	Human Body
In-context		Industrial Design	Contemporary Art	Women
Glossary				Self-expression
Modular chapters				

In Figure 3 the table of contents is laid out on a grid rather than as a simple linear list. Notice that the traditional categories that cover art vocabulary, media, and art history are included with an additional conceptual section focusing on themes that transcend art. Our team of authors asked ourselves how we used textbooks in our own classes and found that we did not always follow the linear path presented by traditional text structures. We decided that the text should be modular to the point that an instructor could assign chapters out-of-order. The chapters read like a series of articles that can be separated from each other. Our idea was to create chapters that don’t rely on a direct path from one cumulative concept to another, giving the instructor and the student more flexibility in teaching and learning. The book can still be used in a linear fashion by reading it from “cover-to-cover,” but this new approach creates opportunities for instructors that other texts don’t offer.

One strategy that we use to emulate non-linear learning in the text structure is the presentation of eight major works of art, dubbed Gateway images, that are discussed from four different perspectives. Two major works are discussed across conceptual categorical boundaries with each being addressed from fundamental, media, art history, and thematic perspectives. Our idea is to cover the same basic information that traditional texts do, but to begin the process of linking ideas in ways that promote more intuitive learning. Intuitive learning processes follow natural patterns more like those that can occur in unstructured environments. The process promoted in this text allows a student to discover concepts through an association of related short discussions that reveal broad concepts rather than stark details. A student of art appreciation is surveying art making an understanding of the “big picture” a valuable outcome. Intuitive learning promotes this kind of understanding.



For example, rather than appearing at only one or two places in a text, *The Great Wave*, by Hokusai, is discussed at least once in each of the fundamentals, media, art history, and theme units. Such depth should help make it clear to the student of art appreciation that every work draws on important concepts from many points of view. It also provides a strong foundation for critical thinking skills because a student can see the many layers of information that an artwork possesses.

The same organization is used to present Raphael's *School of Athens*, and six other major works, with discussions of each of these works found in a number of places throughout the text. This is the kind of informational richness that the current generation of students has come to expect from the Internet but that is missing from the most widely used textbooks.

Because the text is not designed as a traditional cumulative

linear learning experience, we realize that a student will encounter unfamiliar terms. We address this issue by creating an in-context glossary. Rather than being bombarded with an exhaustive explanation of all the terms in the first section of the text, our method introduces and applies terms when they are needed. The student only encounters terms that are related to the current topic. This encourages them to use the term more naturally. Like a hyperlink, source information is quickly available when it is needed.

For example, when students read the drawing chapter for the first time, they will encounter words like “pigment”, “binder” or “cross-hatching.” If the student has not already read chapters that include these terms, they are presented in the margin in an in-context glossary. The in-context glossary, like a hyperlink, provides support information that enhances comprehension by introducing and reinforcing vocabulary throughout the text.

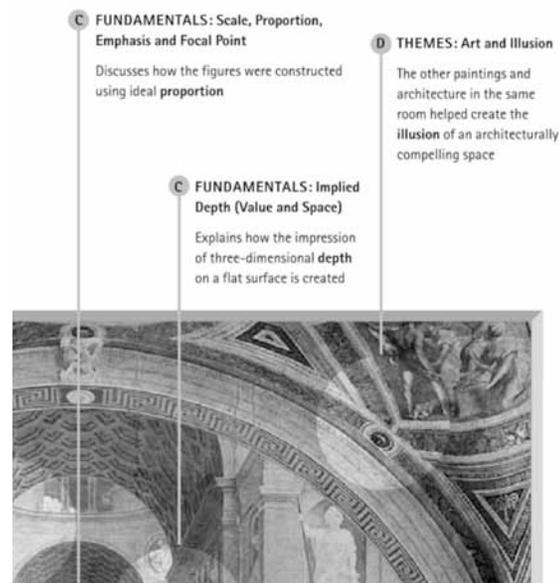


Figure 4

An example of how Gateway images are cross-referenced to provide information from many chapters to provide a deeper understanding of the illustration.

Figure 5

An example of how Gateway images rely on information from many chapters to provide a deeper understanding of the illustration.

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Figure 6

An example of in-context glossary items and how they help promote more non-linear learning by supporting the text.

We felt that most instructors would like to assign chapters in the unique order that best fit their courses. Currently, if an instructor assigns readings in a non-linear order, they run the risk of confusing students because they have skipped over the introduction of an important term. With sensitivity toward non-linear learning, each chapter is written as if the reader has not read any previous chapter other than the Introduction. Students are even referred to other points in the text when a term, image, or concept encourages more in-depth study.

This text also addresses how art functions as a part of our larger culture. Rather than only speaking about art from the perspective of artist, art historian, and art critic it is also evaluated within a larger cultural context. Chapters on art's role in war, science, social protest, illusion, etc., are presented to link art to our daily lives. These themes make art more approachable because it shows how it relates to other aspects of our culture.

Like other texts, short compartmentalized pedagogical features also enrich the dialogue. These are sometimes written from the perspective of the artist, critic, art historian, designer, or architect with an emphasis on concepts accessible to the introductory student.

We need to provide learning that better fits the learning habits of the next generation. This textbook idea only represents a transition toward even greater innovation. The inevitability of e-texts with their hyperlinks and potential for the inclusion of varied media can develop from a text structure like this. Unfortunately, publishers will not be willing to pioneer these new possibilities until there is a demand. It is our duty to make it clear to art text publishers that there is a need for new textbook organizational structures. This kind of change will not come until we have convincingly communicated our needs to the textbook publishing industry.

Gateways to Art, by Debra DeWitte, Ralph M. Larmann, and Kathryn Shields, will be published by Thames & Hudson in October of 2011.

Chalk, pastel, and crayon

Artist chalk, pastel, and crayon are all combinations of **pigment** and **binder** that have been formed into a stick. Pigment, or inert finely ground colored powder, is mixed with a binder, or material that holds the pigment together, to create a tool for drawing. Some common binders are linseed oil, wax, gum Arabic, and gum Tragacanth. Several of these binders can be mixed together to create each material's unique character. Because pigments are raw color, these art materials can be made into any color, giving the artist the immediacy of drawing combined with the visual power of color. These materials also tend to have both a visual and tactile creamy smoothness that is attractive to artists and viewers.

Artists of the Renaissance used colored chalks in their preparatory sketches. A red chalk, known as **sanguine**, was commonly used for this purpose. In Michelangelo's *Studies for the Libyan Sybil*, we see that Michelangelo used this red chalk for drawing

practice in advance of painting the Sistine Chapel Ceiling. In this example we see Michelangelo's use of hatching and **cross-hatching** (overlapped hatch lines) to build up the values to better express the depth of the figure. The artist seemed especially interested in the muscular volume of the back, the face, shoulder, hand, and gave special attention to the big toe. These may have been problem areas that Michelangelo was concerned about, so he spent extra time carefully forming them.

In Edgar Degas' *The Tub* we see pastel being used with great dexterity. Pastel has a charcoal-like texture and Degas has deftly overcome the drawbacks of this medium by laying down intermittent strokes of different color. Then the artist used the softness of the material to give a graduated blending to fuse the color. This process gives a great complexity to the color in the drawing and creates a variety of contrasting textures. Degas, a member of the French Impressionist movement, was interested in recreating the effects of light and color in nature.

Pigment: coloring agent in paint or drawing materials

Binder: material that makes particles of pigment adhere together

Cross-hatching: one set of lines placed in parallel over another set to darken an area in a drawing or print

Edgar Degas, *The Tub*, 1886
Pastel 60 x 83 cm
Musée d'Orsay, Paris

ARTICLE

Perspective Beyond the Vanishing Points

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"The function of art is to do more than tell it like it is—it's to imagine what is possible." - bell hooks

In an age of increasing racial, religious and economic diversity, wherein terrorism has fueled fears of difference, the visual arts and design can foster understanding by addressing divisions which perpetuate ignorance. The studio classroom environment, where most practitioners of art and design get their start, is a great place to begin questioning issues of difference in society. By pairing critical thinking, or cultural/social research with basic foundations problems, the foundation-level curriculum can be a starting point for broadening the students' educational experience. Perspective drawing is one example. Playing upon the word 'perspective,' the content of any related problem could be understood to address both representational drawing skills and particular attitudes or points of view. The act of looking at space through traditional perspective methods in foundational studies, combined with a critical-thinking component that challenges students to discover the perspective(s) of different population groups, can help build and inform students' perception of differences. In the following, I will present a problem that I have been developing in a foundation-level course for the Interior Architecture Program at Ohio University. This problem seeks to bridge these two related aspects of perspective for the sake of sensitizing students to issues of diversity, while deepening their foundations-level education.

Like university populations in other rural college towns in the United States, much of the student population at Ohio University has more limited exposure to ethnic, economic and religious diversity. In response to this, the University has developed many programs to foster diversity on campus. At the classroom level, I began looking for opportunities within design problems to deepen the learning objectives so that they would simultaneously build critical-thinking skills in tandem with studio drawing skills while addressing issues of diversity. I wanted to create problems that met two objectives. The first was to engage traditional perspective drawing methods to help students understand and competently employ the basic principals of perspective in their drawings and presentations. The second was to include a critical-thinking dimension that addressed different cultural perspectives. These objectives would work together simultaneously in problem-solving over the duration of the quarter in a multi-phased process. In the initial phases, drawing and observation would act as research tools providing necessary information for the reflections of critical thinking. In the final phases, drawing would be used to synthesize and present ideas resulting from critical thought by generating images for the final presentation. A formal presentation and discussion would accompany the final presentation, demonstrating the students' formal reflections. Throughout the problem, cultural diversity would be the subject matter.

With this problem idea in mind, I sought a physical building on campus that would represent a perspective challenge to students both physically and conceptually, in light of diversity. Ohio University is a campus where visual unity is achieved through the use of Georgian facades and building types. Established in 1804, the university's architecture is a collection of red brick buildings framed with white columns, pediments, and window frames, modeled after campuses like Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia. In this environment, there is a small multi-purpose octagonal chapel that sits near the center of campus, named Galbreath Chapel. Corresponding to the style of campus, the chapel's entrance is framed with a small portico of four white columns and a triangular pediment. The exterior walls are of red brick, and a dramatic towering lantern with a pointed spire creates a striking roofline. The interior is a neutral space appointed by a palette of white-trimmed pilasters, light-stained wooden pews, clear glass windows, and a small pipe organ behind the altar. The neutrality of the chapel reflects a generally New England protestant aesthetic.

I selected Galbreath Chapel because of its octagonal shape, which would pose a complicated study in perspective, and because of the cultural significance of religious spaces. "The architecture of houses of worship reflects the highest values of our culture, and distinct forms have evolved for use by specific groups. These styles have been shaped by national origins, religious history, and symbolic and liturgical requirements."¹ This physical structure, in its form and function, was a place on campus where the objectives I sought to merge seemed most apparent. In the selection of this building, religion became the subject of difference. With the site in place, I began the problem. The following section outlines the project sequence, and corresponds to images demonstrating the student outcomes.

Perspective Beyond the Vanishing Points

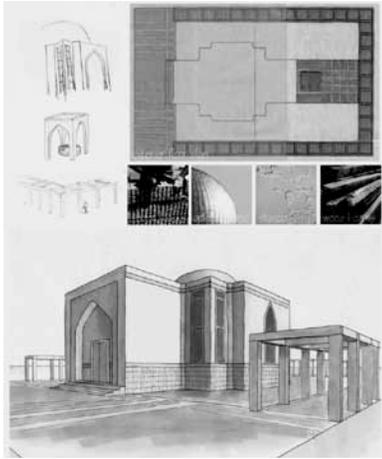


Figure 1
Student Work: Megan Maiberger
Part 1: Perspective and sketches
of Galbreath Chapel.

Phase One: Observational Perspective and Inquiry:

When introducing perspective, I have found it important for students to spend time working with observed perspective as well as plotted perspective. Having an actual building to work with as a source can help them to understand the difference between seeing perspective in actual space versus plotting it in a more systematically controlled system. In phase one, the focus was upon observational perspective. For the introduction of this problem, the class met at the chapel. They were asked to come with cameras, sketchbooks, tape measures and other media. The first challenge was the documentation of the existing chapel using observational perspective techniques in various media. Students documented the interior and exterior of the chapel using observational drawings and photo-collages over a two-week period. Measurements of the building were obtained in teams providing documentation for phase two. To introduce the critical-thinking component of the project, students were provided reflection questions to answer while spending time at the building. What does an octagon represent in the history of religious building types? What do the material choices indicate, in light of the university's and school's demographics? How do students' perceive the chapel? Does the building seem appropriate for Ohio University? Students had varying responses. Adrienne Consales noted, "Galbreath is very simple and plain with a neutral color palette, which I think is important in a non-denominational church." Others found this simplicity to be unwelcoming and uninviting to college students. Many students were surprised to learn about the symbolism of the octagon—its reference to eternal life for Christians. These inquiries into history, form and social context complimented the drawing exercises. After spending time in and around the chapel, Tess Rodriguez noted, "I feel that if I were to just walk into the building I would have missed a lot of the detail that the building has. But after sitting, and spending time in the space and documenting it, I found a lot of interesting aspects that I was able to draw. The studies allowed me to take a closer look."

Phase Two: Plotted Perspective

After spending two weeks documenting the space through observed perspectives, students brought their information back to the studio where it became information for the second phase: plotted perspective drawings. Over a four week period, students would create a plotted perspective of Galbreath Chapel. I provided lectures and demonstrations on one and two-point perspective techniques in conjunction with John Pile's textbook, *Perspective for Interior Designers*. This text provides thorough illustrations and diagrams for the building of a room grid in multiple perspectives, as well as guidelines for plotting furnishings and detailing to scale. The first step was to translate the research into hand-drafted floor plans using ink outlines, colored marker and pencil to indicate finishes and palette. Students took the dimensions from the floor plan and began plotting the building in perspective. The challenge in working with the octagonal structure is that it required students to work with multiples sets of vanishing points simultaneously. Students built their drawing through mapping out a room grid, plotting the multiple vanishing points from the floor plan, and developing the various details of walls and furniture in cumulative layers of tracing paper. They then placed a larger sheet of vellum over the layers of tracing paper and transferred the information to the surface by tracing in ink. This final image was detailed using markers and color pencils. The color application was informed by the material studies of the interior. The illustration of material finishes helped students understand how color and pattern were read at various scales within a drawing. (Figures 1, 3 and 5)

Phase Three: Research

While completing the plotted perspective assignment, students were presented a research task focusing on a multicultural/religious dimension. Each person was asked to research a religious tradition outside of his or her own experience for the purpose of re-designing the chapel building. Most individuals had some familiarity with Christian religions. In response, many students selected to work with Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, or branches of Christianity different from their own background. To initiate their research, campus organizations, such as the University Interfaith Association and the United Campus Ministries offices were used as resources in addition to other research sources. For the particular faith chosen, students needed to identify the necessary ritual components for the space, and look to various historical models for source material. Students working on the same religious topic often combined efforts, and some organized interviews of practitioners on or near campus. This information was gathered during the same four-week period as the plotted perspective drawings. Both activities concluded

at the same time in preparation for phase four.

Phase Four: Synthesis

By this point students had spent six weeks learning perspective drawing and considering questions about religious spaces and culture. In this phase, the practice of drawing was focused on repurposing Galbreath Chapel for the particular use of a specific religion. The research informed the evolution of the new space from a non-denominational university chapel to a religious space for a single faith. The students were tasked with using the previously learned perspective drawing techniques to illustrate their ideas for reconfiguring the chapel. The drawings would reflect multiple solutions to various questions that the students were seeking to answer. What styles might be more appropriate for a Buddhist Temple in Ohio versus another location? How would a Mosque use an octagonal room when considering the direction of Mecca? Surprising cultural elements also came into the redesign considerations. "After researching the religion, I was surprised to learn...[of]...the separation between male and female worshipers. I was mostly influenced by the idea that men and women couldn't worship in the same room. That influenced me to create two separate entrances and create two distinctive spaces yet connect them in a way," notes Tess Rodrigues in her preparations for a Mosque design. The synthesis of these inquiries found expression in a series of final drawings reimagining Galbreath Chapel. (Figures 2, 4 and 6). In this merging of research with drawing, the drawing reflected the students' critical-thinking. It demonstrated their ability to consider a space from another's perspective.

After ten weeks (on a quarter system) this problem concluded with a formal critique. This arena provided the final reflection opportunity in which students presented the development of their ideas to a group of peers and faculty. For the critique, they presented the entirety of the problem, which included the documentation of the chapel as it is, and their re-purposing of the space for the religion studied. (Figures 1-6) The presentation took the form of two posters, showing a before and after comparison. In this public space, students discussed their research and explained their decisions about the transformation of the space. Their images illustrated their particular concerns and discoveries, and were the primary source for response by faculty and other students.

I have outlined the objectives and phases of an evolving design problem for foundational studies in art and design. My goals, as stated prior, were to expand the notion of perspective in drawing, to include perspective(s) in the sense of social diversity. The strategy was to shift the emphasis of the coursework from the action of drawing, to the resolution of a problem where drawing was a research vehicle, and an ideation tool used to illustrate critical thinking. By assigning drawing these responsibilities, it de-centered it as subject, and re-centered the social and cultural context of art and design as areas of exploration and discovery via the action of drawing. As foundation studios are meant to prepare college students by providing them with broad art and design skill-sets, that education is only strengthened if it is combined with relevant cultural content. This helps the students in their own artistic development, and it helps them to "imagine what might be possible" when they are challenged to engage the culture in which they live on different levels. Focusing attention on the cultures, traditions, and ethics in which art and design exist creates insightful and meaningful experiences for students. These insights are all the greater when students discover them for themselves, and when they discover it through interaction with one another. The meaningful discovery then begins to transform their way of working, by stimulating their interest in the ongoing development of art and design where they find themselves a part. But the transformation does not take place by chance or accident; rather, it is the result of carefully planned, comparative, and reflective assignments. This is my overarching pedagogical goal, one that I am always seeking to improve with each new term.

In evaluating this problem, for the sake of improvement, I considered the following outcomes: student projects (two final posters), reflection question responses, and an informal survey given to students at the conclusion of the problem. Overall, the problem seemed successful. Through discussions with colleagues, and student responses, the student work produced seemed appropriate. Most of the survey responses were positive regarding their overall learning experience with both the drawing skills, and subject matter explored. From the outcomes I would consider making a few changes. In terms of perspective drawing, I would consider shifting away from an octagonal structure, because the complexity of the perspective was extremely difficult for some

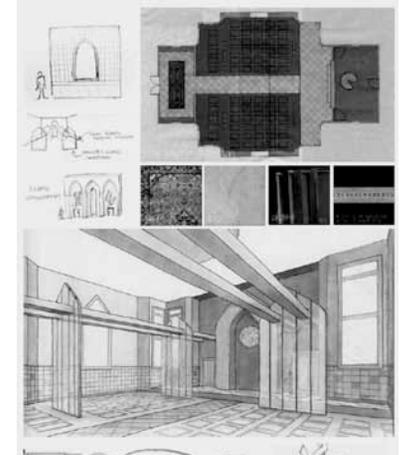


Figure 2
Student Work: Megan Maiberger
Part 2: Schematic design proposal
to transform the student chapel into
a mosque.

Perspective Beyond the Vanishing Points

students, or I might find two different structures, and leave the complex structure as an option for advanced students. Regarding the critical-thinking/research component, I would more formally structure the reflection process to include a Blackboard discussion forum for comment by others in the class, thus, elevating the discourse through a collective intelligence model. By having students respond directly to one another's ideas, peer critiques and discussions would be brought more directly into the reflection process. This would enhance the diversity aim of the problem by making it part of the structured learning process.

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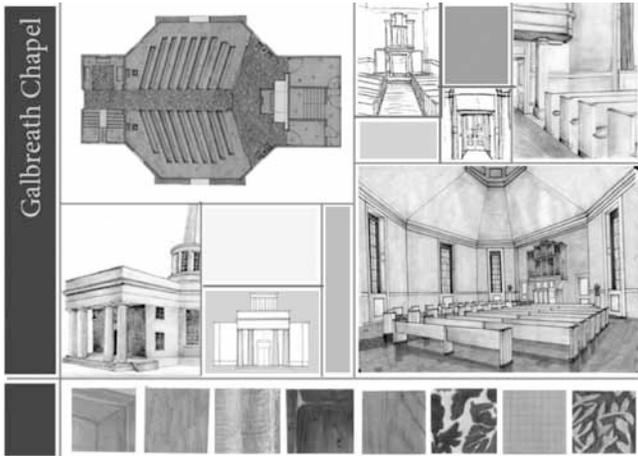


Figure 3
 Student Work: Lindsey Mullet
 Part 1: Perspective and sketches of Galbreath Chapel.

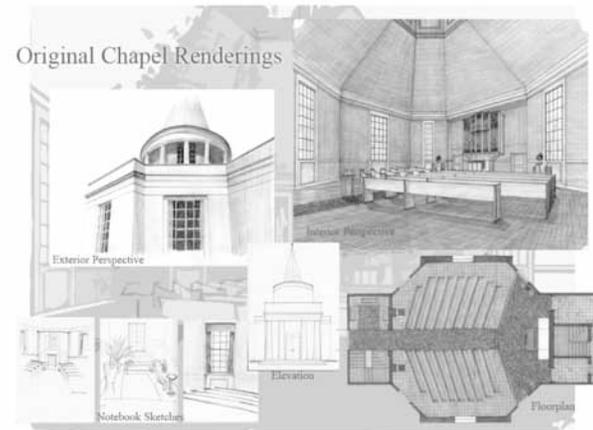


Figure 5
 Student Work: Caitlin Karl
 Part 1: Perspective and sketches of Galbreath Chapel.

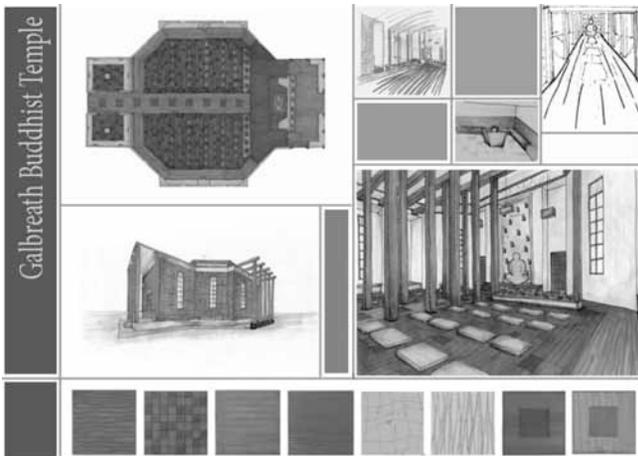


Figure 4
 Student Work: Lindsey Mullet
 Part 2: Schematic design proposal to transform the student chapel into a Buddhist temple.



Figure 6
 Student Work: Caitlin Karl
 Part 2: Schematic design proposal to transform the student chapel into a Buddhist temple.

BOOK REVIEW

EnvironMentalities:
Twenty-Two Approaches to Eco-Art
by Linda Weintraub
Artnow Publications, 2007

Reviewed by
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In an era of melting glaciers and changing climates, Eco-Artists work with the environment to promote an ecological balance between humans and nature. Despite a number of publications dedicated to landscape art or the science of ecology, few books link art and ecology together. *EnvironMentalities: Twenty-two Approaches to Eco-Art*, recent work by artist and curator Linda Weintraub, in collaboration with Skip Schuckmann, biologist and resource planner, teaches the foundations of Eco-Art and the fundamentals of this movement. This approach is original; not only is ecology well defined and analyzed, the book also explores new concepts in the Eco-Art field by analyzing the benefits of the art and ecology merger. Throughout the book, the author examines scientific actions combined with creativity. Weintraub proves the strength behind Eco-Art by examining the works of artists who pose solutions to environmental destruction, pollution, and neglect.

Weintraub's *EnvironMentalities: Twenty-Two Approaches to Eco-Art* can be used as a guide book to educate readers about Eco-Artists. The author achieves this goal by defining a set of environmental concerns, then gives examples of work that respond to these issues. She claims that these analyzed Eco-Artists are the "avant-guardians" of the twenty-first century. These artists push the boundaries of pre-conceived thought and action past the museums and galleries and into a realm which allows artists to educate others about environmentalism.

Although the genre of Eco-Art was established in the 1970's, the Land Art genre has stolen the scholarship spotlight for the last four decades. Land Art, also known as Earth Art, was pioneered by artists such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, and Dennis Oppenheim, who made large-scale works in the mountains and prairies of the Western United States. They abandoned fine art materials—clay, bronze, and marble—and began sculpting instead with unrefined materials such as rocks and dirt. Although diverse, the Earth Artists were united in their common conviction that art can succeed outside of the walls of a gallery. Thus, taking their work outdoors, the space became the landscape and their materials became the Earth. Their ultimate goal was to create work that adhered to the standard Modernist function, but outside the halls of Modernism. Eco-Artists, by comparison, also used earthen or recycled materials, but visually offered creative or aesthetic solutions to remediate or detoxify the environment. By combining creativity with action, Eco-Artists suggested solutions to environmental problems.

Despite the many Eco-Art works created throughout the last four decades, little scholarship has focused on this genre. As one of the few scholars in the field, Weintraub cites her own publications as well as personal interviews with the artists included. She does often refer to one book, Baile Oakes's *Sculpting with the Environment: A Natural Dialogue*, which contains a similar philosophy. Because Oakes's book was published in 1995, however, it does not mention Eco-Artists of the last decade. Weintraub's publication builds off Oakes's 1995 work, but offers examples by recent artists and their answers to current ecological issues.

Along with including new and engaging examples, this text contributes to art-historical scholarship by defining the unique interplay between science and art. Weintraub's main agenda is to address why artists and ecologists should work together; ecology, she argues, cannot create environmental reform on its own. The beginning of the book notes the restrictions of ecology, and explains how art can benefit the scientific field. For example, successful ecological data is precise and accurate—scientific methods do not allow for error. Ecological artwork, however, merits creativity, originality, and imagination. One does not have to analyze data to understand the importance of Daniel McCormick's sculptures for example; he weaves together branches and twigs and places them in deteriorating streams in order to create artificial salmon habitats. The sculptures are both aesthetically interesting—they look like a wind-swept swirl of branches—yet they are functional because they restore the watershed. Because Eco-Art does not need proven scientific data in order to be successful, Weintraub argues that art installations can attempt to reclaim, restore, and mitigate environments, inform communities about their surrounding land, and help envision an environmentally healthy future.

Weintraub's writing style is approachable—she writes for both artists and non-artists alike. In the first three chapters, she explains the scientific terms necessary to understand Eco-Art. For instance, in Chapter Two, Weintraub defines "environment"

**EnvironMentalities:
Twenty-Two Approaches to Eco-Art**

by asking her readers to name factors that affect their personal definition of "environmentalism." She first asks the reader to envision his or her own space, and how he or she interacts within the environment. She pairs this with scientific definitions ecologists use to define "environment," "ecosystem," "community," and "habitat." These descriptions shed new light on important issues by forcefully examining the meaning behind each component. These questions encourage readers to envision themselves in the environment in which they live. As Weintraub notes, "Creating a personal definition of environment marks the preliminary step in becoming an environmentalist."

In the next section, as the title proclaims, Weintraub delves into the "Twenty-two approaches to Eco-Art." These twenty-two approaches are arranged under five subheadings which include: Archetypes, Designers, Activators, Philosophers, and Dramatizers. Under each subheading, Weintraub analyzes the work of four or five Eco-Artists. For instance, the Activator chapter includes five different sections of active Eco-Art with each word corresponding to an artist: *Reclamationist*, (Viet Ngo); *Remediationist*, (Mel Chin); *Regenerationist*, (Fritz Haeg); *Restorationist*, (Daniel McCormick); and *Rehabilitationist*, (Buster Simpson). Her personal interviews with the artists allow for their own words to enhance the analysis of the work. She connects all of the five artists in this chapter by proving how action can help heal the environment.

Her "Rehabilitationist" section features Buster Simpson's *Hudson Headwaters Purge* of 1993. Simpson sculpted lozenge-shaped limestone tablets, and threw them into the polluted headwaters of the Hudson River in New York's Adirondack Park. Over time, the submerged limestone was meant to dissolve and "sweeten" the pH of the river. A higher pH makes the water less acidic and less toxic for people and wildlife. Simpson's performance of *Hudson Headwaters Purge* publicized the rampant pollution of the Hudson River and thus educated the public, whose consumption contributed to the pollution, about their impact on nature.

Along with analyzing the installation, Weintraub relates Simpson's work to the Hudson River School, conservation movements, and ecological practices. Considered the first modern art movement in the United States, Hudson River School painters such as Thomas Cole, Frederick Church, and Albert Bierstadt documented the Hudson River Valley and all its virgin splendor. Weintraub compares this nineteenth-century artist group to Simpson, for his performance and sculptures ironically draws attention not to the Hudson River Valley's beauty, but instead to its poisonous plight. She notes how polluted the Hudson River became from accumulating years of industrial runoff. In 1993, the same year that Simpson created his *Hudson Headwaters Purge*, the river was designated as the nation's largest toxic river site. Weintraub thus argues that Simpson links art and ecology together by bringing attention to the polluted river and praises Simpson's attempt to detoxify the water, making her classification of Simpson as a "rehabilitationist" artist especially apt.

In addition to the work of Simpson, Weintraub analyzes the art of other artists who create work with an environmental agenda. Some artists, like Mel Chin, remediate landfills. Other artists, like Andy Goldsworthy, collect dead and live leaves to make aesthetically pleasing creations. Viet Ngo's work naturally detoxified water on a grand scale by using a plant commonly known as duckweed, and Alan Sonfist created a refuge for endangered plants and trees. Thus this merger of art and science, if conveyed in a successful manner, can bridge the divide between transmitting and understanding necessary information about the state of our ecosystem.

Although the proactive examples of artwork brought forth in this book deserve much credit, the illustrations leave something to be desired. For a book on art, the black and white images do not offer justice to the artists' work. Fortunately, the concepts about the art are descriptive and engaging, which fills the visual void.

This compilation could be of interest to students in foundations courses and studio classes, as well as instructors interested in teaching between the disciplines of art and ecology. The writing style and concepts addressed in this text are appropriate for upper level high-school art classes and early college studio classes. The numerous Eco-Art examples could be used as a springboard

for ideas for studio assignments and the questions can spark discussion. The text's conclusion includes four environmental dilemmas for students to ponder. In one example, under the subheading, "Doing right versus doing good," the author asks if there are ethical limits to preserving wilderness. Although these questions cannot directly be answered, perhaps young adults can foster an understanding of their own surroundings. Whether it concerns helping an endangered ecosystem, or even a local city park, this book provides students with examples of how creative energy can mend ailing environments.

Weintraub's book merits attention for bringing to light an understudied art movement. This inspiring compilation leaves the reader questioning his or her own ideas on how to formulate and process environmental strategies through both art and discussion. More importantly, this text can be used to spread information about Eco-Art as a discipline, and how these artists channel creativity to make places environmentally sound. By writing about these influential artists, Weintraub openly encourages all readers to join the crusade in healing the planet.

BOOK REVIEW

Landscape Theory

Edited by Rachael Ziady DeLue and James Elkins

London Routledge, 2008

Reviewed by

Christine Brueckner McVay

Freelance Writer

Landscape Theory, edited by Rachael Ziady DeLue and James Elkins (London, Routledge, 2008) is the sixth volume in the "Art Seminar" series, sponsored by the University College Cork, the Burren College of Art, Ballyvaughan, both in Ireland; and the School of the Art Institute, Chicago. Within the broad context of contemporary theory, the series takes a fresh look at such subjects as the Renaissance, art criticism, photography theory and art history itself, seeking to open up a conversation without prescribing a specific agenda for thinking and writing about art.

After much recent attention to urban environments, scholarship in various disciplines is attending to landscape, its ontology, function, meaning and representation. Because the "Art Seminar" project centers on roundtable discussions, the resulting books begin with essays that set the scene, introducing new approaches rather than offering comprehensive or definitive overviews. This pattern carries through in *Landscape Theory*, whose introductory essays look at landscape from experiential-literary, critical, allusively poetic/practical, and theory-based points of view. The book's organization, sandwiching the seminar between written essays, works well, since the conversation moves fast and makes elliptical references for which the written material provides context.

Rachael Ziady DeLue's introductory essay, "Elusive Landscapes and Shifting Grounds," takes up the idea of blindness to landscape scenes induced by prior representations and by our own embedded notions and expectations. As a solution to this visibility problem she describes defamiliarization techniques such as sidelong glances that engender a kind of raw seeing. This experiential "way of seeing" offers a contrast to Dennis Cosgrove's arguments, which make up the next chapter.

Cosgrove revisits his 1984 book, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* in an introduction written for its 1998 reissue. He puts forward a hybrid insider-outsider approach to landscape that merges a sense of place with socially conscious criticism, backing away from an earlier view that twentieth century materialist geography replaced the romantic or spiritualized landscape as the basic approach to the natural environment.

Cosgrove's take on symbolic landscape, mainly as social expression, characterizes its representations in pictures, theater, texts and simulacra. He contrasts his own emphasis on the cultivated land with Simon Schama's mythologies of wild places, such as forests. While Cosgrove corrects his earlier thinking, mentioning such omissions as environmental issues and patches in newer ideas, he doesn't quite propose a new thinking overall.

Anne Whiston Spirn's essay is a meditation on landscape as language. "'One with Nature': Landscape, Language, Empathy and Imagination" makes a lyrical case for landscape literacy. Spirn, a landscape designer, performs in this piece the kind of doubled consciousness that some of the other authors call for, situating herself inside the landscape as she experiences it and outside as she conceptualizes it. Her point that our relationship with landscape precedes the words we now use to name its features and processes underlies her call for both empathy with respect to that natural matrix in which we live and for greater "dialogue" with landscape in our re-shaping of it.

In "Writing Moods," James Elkins links the difficulty in writing about landscape to similar problems in writing about body. Landscape is us, so to speak; how do we stand outside it to see it? Garden writing, on which he focuses, lacks a critical methodology to give it "coherence." While he claims that "reverie" is as necessary as critical thinking, Elkins critiques an excess of impressionism in some garden writing. He's also impatient with fast cuts from concrete landforms to imagined Edens. He finds value in joining differing ways of seeing gardens but wants their use to be self-conscious and conceptually connected.

The "Art Seminar" on which this volume pivots includes a dozen scholars, art historians, geographers, landscape architects and urban planners who bring disparate perspectives to bear on landscape, its meaning and functions. Various definitions for landscape are developed: spiritual response to nature; product of natural forces and of human actions; material process of shaping;

Landscape Theory

experience within space and time; metaphor for redemption and so on. While the idea of landscape as ideology dominates the discussion, landscape as experienced phenomenologically ends it, raising related issues of subjectivity and consciousness. A separate discussion of landscape as art considers romantic, nostalgic, postmodern, postcolonial and abstract landscapes. The meanings and histories of maps, landscape representation and presentation are explored within the context of a split between aesthetics and utility that developed in prior discussion.

The ideas this interdisciplinary conversation presents are fleshed out, interpreted and critiqued in the "Assessments" section of the book. Jill H. Casid, for example, questions the absence of diaspora and immigration within the discussion, puts hybrid space forward as a site of social and economic complexity, and offers a new center of discussion—commodity (specifically sugar) as agent of landscape transformation. The difference between region and space, belonging, iconography, popular landscape, boundaries, travel, technology, the problem of western interpretations of Chinese landscapes, the revival of landscape paintings and other implications or omissions from the seminar are here detailed in eighteen short reaction essays.

Finally, "Afterwords" presents extended commentaries on the discussion. Alan Wallach ("Between Subject and Object") focuses on commonplace landscape experiences, such as roadside views to question power relationships. Using examples such as panorama to show identification with and alienation from dominating power, he questions the near fusion of subject and object presented in the discussion. Elizabeth Helsinger's "Blindness and Insights" redirects the argument to the difference between the "real" and the represented landscape, re-emphasizes the centrality of time, and reintroduces the process of landscape making. Analogizing from romantic poetry, Helsinger locates the meaning of landscape in the process of places experienced transforming into meaningful "spots of time."

The book covers a lot of territory. It provides no one trajectory or big idea, but offers many perspectives, along with countering arguments. As a sourcebook it is rich—perhaps too rich. Some of its authors muse on "the landscape" as a singular and unitary phenomenon. Conversely, landscape theory here might more accurately be envisioned as landscape theories. However, because they are short and focused, individual essays can be pulled out and read separately.

As a pedagogical text, particularly in the context of art history, *Landscape Theory* works as a source for critical thinking about landscape, one of the primary genres of art practice. The book provides a model for exploring the context of artworks and their function in society. Its multiple viewpoints open up many ways to relate visual analysis and critical thinking. While theory's relevance to studio practice itself may seem indirect, because the issues raised bear on the meaning and purpose of art, discussion that centers on this book (and on others in the series) can help focus student intentions for the works they make.

The State of Fate

Scott Betz, President
Foundations in Art: Theory and Education
Associate Professor
Winston-Salem State University

Another successful year has passed, and FATE's continued growth and achievements are largely the result of a dedicated board and an energized membership. Most notably, FATE has looked for innovative ways to improve and expand communication with members and find new opportunities for the exchange of ideas and research.

Jerry Johnson has worked tirelessly to keep our membership informed through publication of three, yearly newsletters, on-demand email blasts relaying urgent news to 3,000 subscribers, and regular and frequent updates to our website. (Please note the new address for our website: <http://www.foundations-art.org>) Additionally, FATE's presence has expanded to include important online resources such as Facebook, Wiki and Second Life.

Jesse Payne's efforts working with Regional Coordinators has resulted in a noticeable spike in activity, and he has generously dedicated much time to mentoring first-time regional conference directors.

Jeff Boshart continues to keep our books balanced, insuring that we are financially healthy and investing strategically into quality programming and administrative service. In addition, Diane Highland and Jo Ellen Hickenbottom keep a steady hand on our membership and conference finances.

Of course FATE could not do what we do without the consistent contributions from our 70 Supporting Institutions. This revenue supports publication of the newsletter and this peer-juried publication, *Fate in Review*, wonderfully organized and edited by Kevin Bell.

Collaboration is clearly becoming one of many important tools to improve and provide the best exchange of ideas, research and support of foundations education. This emerged during our Fall Board meeting held on the proposed 2011 conference site in St. Louis, as Board members discussed ways to build on the success of Portland's 2009 conference. Earlier in the Summer, several FATE board members and myself met in Richmond, VA with members of the Mid America College Art Association and explored overlapping themes and missions of both organizations and the potential for a shared conference. Several experienced members of the Southeastern College Art Conference met us as well. While this type of collaboration is new to FATE, the history of SECAC and MACAA's past shared conferences will provide a financial and program model for our 2011 event. At our Board meeting in St. Louis, we combined this initiative with a plan from the Integrative Teaching Thinktank (ITT) to create a truly unique collaborative conference experience capturing the big picture of foundations and its impact on the entire college experience. I am excited with the opportunity to work with our board and members on the ground in St. Louis as we collaborate with both MACAA and ITT.

As I work with the FATE board and members towards the next publication of *FATE in Review* and the 2011 FATE National Conference in St. Louis, I hope to have your support, both by renewing your membership as well as your input and engagement in the ideas, events, and future direction of the organization. Come to our sessions at the College Arts Association Conference organized by Steven Bleicher, our sessions with the Southeastern College Art Conference organized by Greg Skaggs and the Mid America College Art Association conference session organized by Marlene Lipinski. Share the newsletter with faculty and encourage submissions to *FATE in Review* and the Call for Sessions and Call for Papers for the 2011 FATE Conference.

My thanks to the FATE Board and all the members of FATE as I wish you the best year yet for education, for art and for all your goals!

About FATE

Foundations in Art: Theory and Education, FATE, is a national, non-profit 501(C)(3) organization dedicated to the promotion of excellence in the development and teaching of college-level foundations courses in both studio and art history. Founded in 1977 as an affiliate society of the College Art Association (CAA), members include approximately 400 studio and art history faculty and administrators, and over 60 sponsoring institutions. The organization sponsors a national conference bi-annually, regional conferences in interim years, panel sessions at CAA and regional associations, and publishes a professional journal (*FATE in Review*) and a newsletter. For more information, please see the website at foundations-art.org.



FATE logo

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Mid-America College Art Association Representative
Marlene Lipinski, Columbia College Chicago

Southeastern College Art Conference Representative
Greg Skaggs, Troy University

FATE Membership Information

Regular membership dues are \$50.00 for 2 years.
Graduate Student Membership is \$20.00 for 2 years.
Institutional sponsorships are \$100.00 for one year.

Membership applications forms can be found at www.foundations-art.org.
Complete forms and dues should be sent to:

Diane Highland
FATE Membership Coordinator
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, IL 61920

Further membership information:
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FATE Institutional Sponsors

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