

Valuing the Arts on Their Own Terms? (*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*)

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Abstract: Profound differences exist between the ways in which arts educators and artists personally value the arts and the rationales offered via arts advocacy campaigns for public arts support. The author argues that those discrepancies carry grave consequences for K–university arts education. The author describes means by which to better reconcile valuing the arts for their intrinsic qualities with intense political pressure to justify arts education in terms of its alleged ability to improve students' math and reading skills and to address concerns of social justice and economic development. This article was adapted from a keynote speech given by the author on 13 October 2006 for the 62nd annual meeting of The National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

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Arts educators and advocates for arts education must continuously justify resources allocated to K–university arts programming. We look far and wide, over hill and dale, for convincing reasons why it is essential that the arts be part and parcel of the education enterprise. We proffer a variety of justifications and assume so many field

identities from year to year that, at times, the face in the mirror looks more like math than music or drug rehab than visual arts. Many of us call out for honesty and clarity, for an end to this chameleonic existence. We say the arts are important first and foremost for what they teach us about the human (and humanizing) experience of the sensate world in which we live and about art itself. We say the arts should be valued on their own terms. But what does that mean and is it really a good idea?

Allow me to answer the first question right up front so we may proceed forthwith to the second question and main topic at hand, that is, the repercussions of our rationales for the inclusion of the arts in the general K–university curricula. I would venture to say that valuing the arts on their own terms means to ascribe the worth of a specific art form in terms of its intrinsic qualities. Let us take, for example, the visual arts. Intrinsic qualities of visual works of art are the sensorial, intellectual, and emotional stimuli derived from images and compositions of arranged lines, colors, textures, shapes, and forms or, in the case of *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, the coupling of words and images. Thus, to value the visual arts on their own terms means to place great worth on the knowledge, experience, meaning, and

observational and manual skills—in short, ways of thinking and doing—that emerge from contemplation of and reaction to such stimuli.

Is valuing the arts on their own terms a good idea? I believe it is. But is justifying the arts on their own terms a good idea? That depends.

From Valuing to Justifying and Advocating

Before grappling further with the issue of valuing the arts on their own terms, we need to consider other ways in which the arts are valued, even though, I confess, simply valuing them on their own terms is good enough for me. If I may be frank, I think that is good enough for most people who are genuinely engaged in and care about a particular art form. However, we have to think on a larger scale (or at least more deviously, or rather, creatively) because the truth is that informing the chancellor of a major research university:

Mr. Chancellor, I realize that the university only has an annual budget of \$2.2 billion and the art department already gets a whopping .001% of that, but, you know we really could use ten times that amount because the art faculty and our students value greatly the knowledge, experience, meaning, and observational and manual skills we derive from making art, and thinking about the visual properties and significance of works of art and, well, we'd like to value it ten times more . . .

may not get you that additional \$20 million. Many seasoned arts administrators have come to realize that simply leveling with college presidents, grant makers, and politicians about the main reason we care about the arts, that is, personal sustenance and satisfaction, may not be the savviest marketing approach.

We have to think bigger; we have to give those power people bigger, broader, badder *raison d'être* to give us more support or at the very least, to not take away what we have. And beside that, one will actually find it helpful to periodically consider probable pro- and consequences that grow out of the various ways we explain to others why our own specific work in the arts, and arts programming in general, is worthy of their engagement and support.

Let me be clear from the beginning that the focus of this article is on the ways that we value and justify educational programming in the arts. That is because I am an educator and, as a reader of *Arts Education Policy Review*, you are most likely an educator or care deeply about education, arts education specifically. Thus, when discussing my own and others' penchant for justifying the arts by way of their impact on economic development, I focus on the ways in which a general or professional arts education is thought to contribute to that goal; not in the broader terms of how building a performing arts center will "bring new life" into a downtown sucked dry by surrounding megamalls, or of the "multiplier effect" of arts spending as tallied in those "arts and the economy" and the "arts means business" brochures that claim that for every public dollar spent on arts programming the community (i.e., restaurateurs, dry cleaners, parking lot owners, and babysitters) gets many more in return.

And, yes, I know significant differences exist in the way that we think about K–12 education versus higher education. Yet, as the Commission on the Future of Higher Education, under the direction of the U.S. Department of Education (*New York Times* 2006) pushes to impose standardized testing at the university level, those of you in higher education who have not paid

much attention to that credo's effect on the place and space for arts programming in the K–12 level may want to check it out. Whether K–12 or college, we have much in common; more commonalities than differences, I believe. Indeed, that is true when we consider our ways of thinking and talking about why art matters.

Ways of Valuing

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

As arts education administrators, faculty, and researchers, we also think about how the practice and study of an art form contributes to our students' ability to engage more deeply, broadly, and insightfully in the world around them. This line of thinking leads us to the impact of the arts on the individual as a contributing member of society and the human community. We in the arts link emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth with an individual's capacity to contribute to society by way of acting as a responsible, industrious, and empathetic person both privately and in the public realm. Empathy is of particular note because we reason that gaining insight into the belief systems, values, and biases of one's own and other cultures opens hearts and minds, breaks down barriers, and encourages self-reflection, out of which comes greater understanding of and, therefore, respect for others. It is only natural, as expected, we think engagement with an art form assists with the development of such attributes and dispositions because, well, look what it has done for us!

However, we cannot let it rest there because, generally speaking, we are a philosophical and dare I say liberal lot,

and we like to ruminate on HUMANITY writ large. Thus, because we still want to practice our art but also save the world, we leap courageously across the divide between that which an art-minded individual can affect, to the aggregate effect of all the world's art-minded individuals on the human community.

This is not a cynical observation. I sincerely think we earnestly make this equation because, as we read about, and at times experience, the abundant chaos, cruelty, and ignorance in the world around us and compare it with the humanistic pleasures and relative sanity of an art-centered life, we believe—not unlike the reasonably religious—that if everyone or most everyone partook of the body Art, the world would be a much better place with fewer Wal-Marts and more smart boutiques to boot.

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

The Need to Justify

Those of us who consider ourselves arts educators (or advocates for arts education) are subject to the same "what's in," "what's out" machinations as the rest of the education community, except even more so. This is especially true if one is part of the K–12 enterprise, whether as a middle school art teacher or as a university professor who prepares aspiring middle school art teachers. Although things are fast heating up for general university arts programming with recent federally sponsored demands for standardized testing and tuition cost controls. Math teachers may be required to annually justify their budgetary expenditures, it is doubtful (almost unthinkable) that they would have to justify why their subject area merits being included in the school curricula. That is because math is in; of course it has always been in but these days it is really in. I guess that is because math is so not in with many

young people that they resist learning much about it even though officials now require teachers to force it down their gullets *foie gras* style. On the other hand, art is out, has always been out, or at least has never really been in, even though it is in with many students. (The fact that art is in with students, and that they have been known to cheerfully do art after school and during summer vacation—unlike math—is actually not helpful to our perpetual efforts to keep the arts and arts teachers in the public schools. However, I will address that later.) Therefore, in order to survive and prosper, it is deemed necessary to attach to and align with what is in, which most often translates into that which is causing the most public angst and alarm.

Terrorism and national security aside for the moment, what societal concerns should our schools and universities address and amend? And in what ways do we as professionals with a vested interest in the arts justify our work and programs in relation to such issues? Jacques Barzun (2002, 1) states (rather quaintly, I think) the single purpose of schools is “to remove ignorance.” Ignorance affects all manner of public undertakings but, unfortunately, is not a particularly pressing societal concern unless its removal is directed specifically toward the attainment of a good job. The Commission on the Future of Higher Education and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings are most concerned with the reported inability of colleges and universities to “turn out students qualified to compete in the global economy” (*New York Times* 2006). Societal concerns for the next generation boil down to one goal, the development of young people into responsible adults who can get and hold onto a job. Of course, we also want them to be healthy, cheerful, and kind. We want those attributes for them for many reasons, not the least being that we recognize those attributes as important preconditions and dispositions for gainful employment.

What knowledge, skills, and attributes (in addition to healthiness, cheerfulness, and kindness) are needed to become and remain gainfully employed? At a minimum, one needs to be literate and

numerate, get along with others, able to take directions and execute orders. As one moves up the employment ladder, from laborer to professional, from employee to employer, from job to career, emphasis placed on basic reading and math skills and on working well within a group, shift toward the need for independent and critical thinking, creative problem solving, management

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skills, and self-motivation. Even so, the Commission on the Future of Higher Education reports that many students who have earned college degrees “have not actually mastered the reading, writing and thinking skills we expect of college graduates” (*New York Times* 2006).

How do we justify our arts programs and practice in relation to such needs and expectations? In general, we have been much more adept and at ease relating arts study and experience to desired changes in attitude and behavior (for example, self-esteem, working collaboratively, self-motivation) and to the achievement of advanced but ambiguous capacities (e.g., critical thinking, creative problem solving) than to the attainment of specific on-the-job knowledge and skills (that is, literacy and numeracy). Over the past decade, however, the high profiles of various studies asserting that learning in the arts improves reading, writing, and math skills has altered substantially the character of our justifications apropos to our contributions to the preparation of the next generation of responsible, employable, successful adults. We have become savvier to the ways and demands of the world as our intensely competitive, market-drenched

society continually ups the ante for more product, promise, and proof. We recognize that justification is defensive and reactive while advocacy is offensive and proactive. Justifying is a position; advocating, like marketing, is a strategy.

A Is for Art! A Is for Achievement!

And A is for advocacy. Advocacy strategies for greater public and political

support of school-based arts instruction, and for after-school and community sponsored arts-based experience and exposure programs, focus primarily on three battlefronts. The first front is spiritual and moral development, including emotional maturation. An increasingly critical second front is arts education’s ability to contribute to brain and skill development. The third major battlefront is the improvement of one’s self-esteem and self-image linked directly to greater mental and physical well-being. My own personal shorthand for this advocacy trinity strategy of spirit, mind, and body is the YMCA Approach.

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

1. Arts learning experiences help students to better know themselves and to better relate to and communicate with those around them.
2. Arts education fosters tolerance of and appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity.
3. Arts education improves children’s attitudes toward school.
4. In-school and community-based arts programming improves self-esteem,

curbs delinquent behavior, teaches discipline, and helps students to better perform academically.

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

Advocacy statements addressing our second aforementioned battlefield, brain and skill development, make these claims:

1. Students with high levels of arts participation outperform arts-poor students on virtually every academic performance measure.
2. Students who study or participate in the arts score higher on standardized tests.
3. Music study improves math scores and spatial skills; reading skills are enhanced by arts learning, particularly through theater and the visual arts.
4. Arts education stimulates creativity, builds communications skills, pro-

notes teamwork, and engenders love of learning in all subject areas.

5. Arts education teaches critical thinking and higher order thinking skills, providing a competitive edge for getting a job in the future.

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

Since Sputnik and the advent of the more math, more science, era in public education, arts educators and researchers have sought evidence of knowledge and skill transfer between arts learning and academics. Five decades and more than eleven thousand articles, books, conference presentations, and sundry unpublished papers later, Harvard Project Zero researchers Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner (2001) headed up a massive research effort (the Reviewing Education and the Arts Project [REAP]) to ascertain the validity of wide-ranging claims that arts study, experience, or exposure lead to various forms of academic improvement. Their resulting report concluded that reliable causal links between arts study and improved academic achievement could be found in three areas only: (a) listening to music, and spatial-temporal reasoning; (b) learning to play music and spatial reasoning; and (c) drama (enacting texts) and verbal skills. The effects of the first area, listening to music and spatial-temporal reasoning, lasted a few hours at most but were heralded loud and far as the Mozart effect. Hetland and Winner cautioned strongly against justifying the arts instrumentally as “a dangerous (and peculiarly American) practice” (5).

The REAP report made a lot of people angry and unhappy, most notably the research contributors to and publishers of

the federal government advocacy document, *Champions of Change* (President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 1996). That document proclaimed the positive effects of all manner of arts encounters on increased academic performance. Defenders of that stance have continued to recycle and reassert the data presented in *Champions*, most often in the form of government-funded advocacy publications presented as research studies. *Critical Links* (Arts Education Partnership 2002), published in direct response to the REAP report, is one of many such federally funded “advocacy” studies.

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

It is unfortunate that many of the more outspoken arts integration advocates (generally those people with a stake in a specific program) pit certainly not new concept of arts integration against “stand alone,” “conventional” (their terms used pejoratively) arts instruction. As do many visual culture art education proponents, they often fail to acknowledge the difficult work and impressive advances made in the development of arts curriculum and pedagogy over the past three decades. They appropriate the long-evolving ideas and hard-won advances of their predecessors; describing their own integrated teaching philosophies and methods as if they themselves are

the originators of those ideas. In their eagerness to set themselves apart from “traditional” arts education, for the sake of fame or funding one must presume, they cherry-pick and co-opt the best of what has been accomplished, tout it as their own, and then define their opponent’s practice in terms of what is left over.

Also, like those who champion VCAE, the arts integrationists call for a seismic shift of the content and mission of arts instruction; the former for purposes of social reconstruction, the latter purportedly to improve student learning in math, reading, science, and social studies. However, unlike the VCAE crowd, which after all is a part of the professional arts education community, arts integration advocates argue for visiting artists (or “teaching artists”) over K–12 arts specialists. Artists are described as being imperative to successful arts integration; K–12 arts specialists are useful as residency coordinators if they are mentioned at all. (*Putting the Arts in the Picture*, [Rabkin and Redmond 2004], a report advocating the integration of the arts with other school subjects and community artists as the linchpin in successful arts integration programming, provides examples throughout its text of the decades-old strategic practice of dismissing the contributions of and ignoring the role of K–12 arts teachers.)

Advocacy statements promising action on our third front, mental and physical well-being, frequently focus more on adults than students with the significant exception of underserved youth and at-risk students of all ages. I must say that our music colleagues are way out in front on this line of battle, however, if the rest of us can get the same sort of marketing support from art and theatrical supply businesses that they receive from musical instrument merchants, we may be able to catch up. American Music Conference (2006b), an affiliate of MENC: The National Association for Music Education, spotlights wellness through music making as a major part of its advocacy efforts. Its music research Web site offers links to

numerous scientific findings that making music provides “measurable improvements in human well-being.” A headline sampling of such studies are: “Music Therapy Increases Serum Melatonin Levels in Patients with Alzheimer’s Disease,” “Group Drumming Boosts Cancer-Killer Cells,” and my favorite, “Recreational Music Program Shows Potential to Combat Nursing Shortage” (American Music Conference 2006b). (Just so you know that music has not cornered the market on curative powers, the American Art Therapy Association Web site links to a news report that visual art also fights Alzheimer’s (Lazo 2006). The National Association of Music Merchants (2006) asserts that making music, on the musical instruments its members sell, lowers your blood pressure and makes you healthier, whereas Hospital Audiences, Inc. (1996), which sells programs and performances to hospitals, insists that simply being a part of an arts audience has a “beneficial impact on health and wellness” (1).

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

Alongside that is the promotion of art as a means of conflict resolution. The

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Brunson 2002) collaborated on the publication of *The Art in Peacemaking: A Guide to Integrating Conflict Resolution Education into Youth Arts Programs*. (Perhaps we could get them to write a sequel, *The Art in Peacemaking: A Guide to Integrating Conflict Resolution Education into University Art Departments*.) The introduction explains that “the fundamental values of the art making experience: trust, risk-taking, respect for process, principled critique, and pride in a finished product [. . . lead students to] experience positive motivation, intense self-discipline, confidence, and perseverance” (6).

The belief that music can serve therapeutic ends vis-à-vis behavioral modification has been around for a very long time; as William Congreve (1697) expressed it, “Musick has Charms to sooth a savage Breast.” In Jacques Barzun’s *Music in American Life* (1956), I found a reference to a gathering of 250 music therapy experts in New York in October 1954. The topic of the conference was “how musical training can aid mentally deficient children (and children with emotional problems, including juvenile delinquents) by giving them self-confidence” (83–84). Barzun quoted the *New York Times*:

We seem to be standing on the threshold of a great development of all the arts as agents of therapy. Of them all . . . music seems perhaps the most personal form of expression, communicating meaning and feeling without need of speech or explanation (84).

A year earlier, Barzun noted, *The International Musician* had published a scholarly survey, “Music—a Panacea,” that reported: “[M]ore and more, in homes, in hospitals, in mental institutions, music is being used to heal both the mind and body of the sick.” The journal considered this news to be of great importance to its readership, especially those who were members of the musician’s union (83–84).

We have come full circle back to spiritual and moral development for the good of the individual and society: Spirit, mind, and body.

And Now, a Word from Our Sponsor

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

You may discern that some members of the K–12 arts education community, particularly those most concerned with the preparation and ongoing support of highly capable K–12 arts teachers, view that much acclaimed research finding as self-serving because it is the nonprofit arts world that comprises the constituency of the NEA and its affiliated state and community arts agencies. School-based arts exposure programs, such as performance assemblies and artist residencies, are an important source of revenue for small performing

arts groups and individual artists. Field trips help art museums fulfill their non-profit duty to provide charitable services, even though very often most or all of the funding for field trips is provided by the school district itself. However, much of the federal arts bureaucracy's campaigning and grant making dispenses with schools altogether, focusing instead on arts learning experiences delivered by local arts groups and artists in after-school and summer programs and in community venues throughout the year. Advocacy, promoting in-school and nonschool arts programs provided by community arts organizations and individual artists, frequently and purposefully blurs the distinction between in-depth study of the arts and arts exposure experiences.

Some ascribe this way of valuing arts education as a means of placating political opponents of government arts subsidies while providing public funding for arts groups and employment opportunities for artists. I admit that this may be an ungenerous way of characterizing the motivations of others in our greater arts family. (The NEA publication *American Canvas* [Larson 1997] spells this out: K–12 arts education offers an escape route for a fiscally cornered nonprofit arts community by providing "immediate payoffs in the form of work for artists and art organizations" [49]. Arts education policy researchers have reported on the blatant self-interest of NEA educational policies and funding practices since the late 1960s. Chapman [1982], in *Instant Art, Instant Culture: The Unspoken Policy for American Schools*, provided an early in-depth analysis of the federal government's systematic de-schooling of arts education.) Be that as it may, the reality is that when we advocate for the arts, we do not just encourage support for the arts in general; although it often sounds that way, we seek support for specific policies and programs in which we have a vested interest. We (and others) seek political advantage and the credit, influence, and funding that is to be had by gaining that advantage.

So where are we? I have examined the many ways that we think about and

speak about why the arts matter to us as individuals and as a society. I have illustrated how our valuing of an art form morphs, sometimes radically, from the intrinsic to the extrinsic when we step out of our studios and into the public domain. I have outlined the socioeconomic concerns and political pressures that often drive our and others justifications of the arts. I have discussed matters of justification and matters of values, and how the two are often at variance with one another.

However, what does this matter to us and to the general public? What does it mean for the future of the arts and arts education when the reasons we most value and practice an art form differ so greatly from the reasons we give others for why they should value and support that art form? What happens when study and support of the arts are justified primarily in terms of what they accomplish for economic development, social justice, and learning in other subjects? What are the promises and pitfalls of mounting a continuous series of new promotional arguments to justify what we do as educators and as artists? How do we balance the push-pull of drawing attention to the vast interconnectedness of the arts to daily life and integrated learning with our responsibility of keeping central the essence of art itself?

The Treachery of Images

Rene Magritte's painting, *La trahison des images*—the treachery or betrayal of images—is a painting, not a pipe, a very realistic image of the object but not the object itself. Images can be treacherous in that there may be little connection between an object and what represents it. In fact, the representation may obscure or hide the true reality of the thing itself. (See Foucault's discussion of *La trahison des images* 1983.) To a very real extent that is what happens when we justify the study and support of the arts in extrinsic terms; we obscure the true reality, the intrinsic qualities of art itself. Ever changing marketing messages of art's omnipotent curative powers and, consequently, of the duties and capabilities of arts educators and artists confound

and disappoint more than they enlighten and convince.

In his essay, "Art Education in a World of Cross-purposes," Sam Hope (2004, 97) provided visual arts educators with a useful framework in which to rethink and if need be, re-create our field. His framework is useful for music, theatre, and dance educators as well. Hope encouraged us to attend foremost to issues impacting the health and survival of the field, posing the principal question: "How well does the field delineate, and then protect, those things that are essential to its survival?" All other policy and programmatic decisions are subsequent to the variables affecting survival and health. Hope lists "several things that the field must have in order to exist," the first being "a definition of content and purpose sufficient to distinguish art education from other fields." We must answer the question, "What is unique about what we do and the content for which we are responsible?" For policymakers, the public, and ourselves, we must be able to answer the question, "Why are the unique things we do worthwhile?" (98). The answers to those questions must then guide us in how we prepare new professionals, and in the weighing of teaching priorities and resource allocations. We must make decisions about curriculum balance and methodological approaches, issues of quality and quantity on which the health of the field hinges.

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

VCAE deems serious attention from visual arts scholars and pedagogues for reasons of field content delineation, assessment of professional responsibilities and capabilities, and its overt sociopolitical agenda. In truth, I agree with the politics of VCAE. I care deeply

about social injustice and inequality, the destruction of our natural environment, and the pernicious effects of macho capitalism. However, I do not agree that our schools should serve as demagogic training centers, not only because that is antithetical to the practice and function of liberal education but also because if our side can do it then the other side can too. And then, Dorothy, we are all in Kansas. However, there is merit in helping students to understand marketing methods and underlying messages of advertising, and to recognize how personal and cultural values are reflected and shaped through all manner of object and space design, perhaps even via Barbie dolls and amusement parks. Yet, if we are to reassert and retain a common, cohesive, identifiable knowledge core, we will need to be judicious about the emphasis we place on such material within the general art curriculum.

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

As you well know, one needs profound knowledge of a subject to present it wholly, that is, from various perspectives embedded in practice and historical, sociopolitical, and in the case of the arts, aesthetic context. To teach comprehensively and connectively is a challenging task even if one's focus remains primarily within the extended visual arts field. As we reach across the map of visual culture and into adjacent disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, world history, political science, and economics we need to critically reassess our own and our colleagues professional and intellectual capabilities. Individually and collectively we are in

serious trouble when we degenerate from scholar to dilettante. Add "integrated arts," as modeled by some of its most ardent advocates, into the more-is-more mix, and our opportunities for dilettantism and dissolution multiply. Our projected image of mega-purposed art education negates the importance of and vitiates the essence of art itself.

Truth and Consequences in Advertising

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

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

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

Why do you design? (2006b) was produced to provide "core messages for which [designers] can create a common chorus . . . to make clear to clients that 'design' is becoming 'Design,' a larger concept that includes strategy as well as artifacts . . ." The message is that design is a way of thinking. AIGA charges its

members to repeat this message and to employ regularly the presented “common vocabulary on the role of the designer” (2–4).

So you find it hard imagine the College Art Association (CAA) presenting it all so tidily, providing their members a common vocabulary with which to describe the value of art and role of artists or art historians? The National Art Education Association (NAEA) has involved itself to a greater extent in framing field purposes and expectations for learning, most notably in the National Standards for K–12 Visual Arts Education. Such worthy offerings aside, what may be the most difficult to imagine is either the CAA or NAEA membership attempting seriously to incorporate such prescribed rhetoric into its everyday way of speaking to others about professional roles and values. AIGA’s pronouncement about “design” becoming “Design” is the antithesis of what art is becoming. In my lifetime, “Art” has become “art” and is fast becoming “visual culture”; a bloated, blurry realm in which the waning concept of “art” holds no privileged place and in which aesthetics is treated as a quaint relic at best, but more often as a weapon of cultural oppression and colonialization.

Yet, those designers may be on to something; to stand up and declare “good design is not cheap” and must be valued, and that you had best “spend your money on something else if you don’t place a high value on what it can achieve.” In short, we know who we are and what we are worth. And (be still my heart) there is good design and bad design! What chutzpah! Would it not be liberating to talk about our art and art education programs like that? To say that art is important to study because, like design, it is a world-altering way of thinking, and doing, and living. That attaining real knowledge of art is not easy. In fact, attaining that knowledge is as demanding, intellectually, as science and mathematics but real knowledge and understanding of art can be had and is worth having because owning the capacity to engage deeply the sensorial, intellectual, and emotional stimuli of

significant works of art is profoundly humanizing and heart and mind expanding. And, by the way, there is good art and bad art and good teaching and bad teaching, and if you do not place a high value on the world knowledge that grows out of arts learning then you had best spend your money on . . .

What am I saying? Sorry, I got carried away. I almost proclaimed that not only valuing privately but also justifying publicly the arts on their own terms is a good idea, an exceptionally good idea. However, the inconvenient truth (thank you, Al Gore) is that we are not strong enough to throw down the gauntlet. Such fortitude would come with (a) enough people, a critical mass, who see clearly and value highly the interconnectedness of art to daily living, thinking, and doing; and (b) a hefty majority of K–university arts educators who have the will and capacity to clearly and inspirationally make those connections within the classroom and in everyday commerce.

This Is a Pipe:

Valuing and Justifying the Arts and Arts Education on Their Own Terms

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

Connectivity to daily life is already central to art; the balance is natural and elegant. If first we choose works of art that are rich in meaning and artistic tradition and then teach for deep understanding of those meanings and tradi-

tions, we will inevitably and enviably connect the essence of art with the essence of life in ways that few other subject areas can match. Our challenge is to champion proudly those practical and magical intersections of art with life, to speak it clearly and astutely. We must dare to say that there is more significant and much less significant art and design and, if we are to make clear our deep relevance to learning and life, we need to focus our teaching on that which is most worthy. We have so little time with our students. Although it may be important to bridge the mundane with the exemplary, we need not tarry overly long in the commonplace.

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

Connectivity to social welfare programming and integration with other school subjects demands political vigilance and careful portioning to keep the scales from tipping so far that art spills onto the floor. My proposition here is to subvert the system. Let us, within reason, whisper what they need to hear but strongly and steadily beat the drum for the intrinsic qualities and contributions of art study and practice. At the same time we must do more than talk; we must hone more precisely and expressively our communication of the genuine overlays of art and life so that we may build that critical mass of the art educated we so acutely need. By all means, let us make and cultivate connectivity among the various arts and humanities disciplines; however, let us keep central deep learning in the subject area for which we are responsible. It is

not isolation we seek but intellectual coherency.

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

Every dimension of the art education enterprise is connected. It is the university that prepares future art educators: K–12 art specialists, teaching artists, art historians, art and cultural criticism professors, aestheticians, designers, architects. It is the university that provides a home for those who conduct research on teaching and learning. It is in college that many students first experience art

as a part of the general liberal arts curriculum and, if captured intellectually, will compose the next generation of exhibition attendees, museum supporters, and art collectors. It is within the institutions of higher education that we all represent that the next generation of visual arts professionals is being cultivated. Art majors and nonart majors come to you more or much less prepared depending on the art education they have received before college. We are all in this together, whether one is an elementary art teacher or university art professor, art college president or dean. Therefore, I implore you to attend to the quality of your art teacher preparation programs. Their success is your success; their failure your failure.

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

The Council of Arts Accrediting Associations (2006) posits that it is higher education's commitment to civilization building that secures the place of the arts in the core curricula. A half century ago, Jacques Barzun (1944, 167) wrote: "[T]he very reason why art is worth teaching at all is that it gives men the best sense of how rich, how diverse, how miraculous are the expressions of the human spirit through the ages."

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

Is advocating for the arts on their own terms a good idea? Only if we can deliver what is promised. Only if we

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

So, gentle reader, please put that in your pipe and smoke it.

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