

# **SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF ART EDUCATION IN THE U.S.: TEACHING VISUAL CULTURE IN A DEMOCRACY<sup>1</sup>**

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## Abstract

This paper is an overview of social perspectives of art education. These perspectives include, but are not limited to, a concern with issues and interactions of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, special ability, and other body identities and cultures; socioeconomics, political conditions, communities, and natural and humanly-made environments, including virtual environments. I focus here on the common ground among the perspectives which is based on the conviction that the visual arts are vital to all societies and that representations of art in education should seek to reveal its complexity, diversity, and integral cultural location. These perspectives represent the lived meanings of art and arts communities through, for example, change in curriculum, collaborative instructional methods, and community action. Social reconstructionist versions of these perspectives are also founded on the

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belief that art education can make a difference in student understanding of and action in the world and that, that difference can enrich and improve social life.

## Social Perspectives of Art Education: Teaching Visual Culture in a Democracy

This paper is an overview of social perspective of art education. It is not a critique; but neither can it be neutral. Rather, it is a sympathetic description of what I believe to be some of the important conditions, characteristics, and purposes of these perspectives in and of the field.

The task of describing these perspectives is difficult because so many social perspectives exist. These perspectives include, but are not limited to, a concern with issues and interactions of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, special ability, and other body identities and cultures; socioeconomics, political conditions, communities, and natural and humanly-made environments, including virtual environments. The common ground among these perspectives is that they are based on the conviction that the visual arts are vital to all societies and that representations of art in education should seek to reveal its complexity, diversity, and integral cultural location. These perspectives represent the lived meanings of art and arts communities through, for example, change in curriculum, collaborative instructional methods, and community action. Social reconstructionist versions of these perspectives are also founded on the belief that art education can make a difference in student understanding of and action in the world and that, that difference can enrich and improve social life.

I do not claim to speak for the many art educators who approach art and art education as a social endeavor and I cannot do justice to each of these various perspectives. It is not my intention to devise categories of perspectives or delineate distinctions between them. Rather, I am more concerned with the task of understanding what they have in common and why art educators maintain social perspectives. So, I will simply try to describe some general characteristics and explain why I believe that social perspectives of art education are just good art education.

This paper has three parts. First, I will summarize what I believe to be

influential theoretical foundations of these perspectives. Second, I will briefly discuss related historical and recent developments in the field. Third, I will reflect on some of the recent changes in visual culture that led me to my social perspective.

## Democratic Art Education: Some Theoretical Foundations

The visual arts, in a sense, help to make life worth living. They enable us to create, force us to think, provide us with new possibilities and allow us to revisit old ideas. It is artistic freedom — that is the freedom to create and have access to those mind-expanding ideas and objects — that perhaps best illustrates democratic thought. At a time when democracy is being challenged by even our own policy-makers, the protection of art and art education in social institutions is becoming increasingly important.

One of the most often quoted statements ever written by an American is the following:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The beginning of the second paragraph of the United States Constitution (with my small adaptation) states the reason that the visual arts and art education are necessary in a democracy. If we view art and art education as aids to making life meaningful, as reflections of liberty, and as means through which people might pursue a constructive form of happiness, art education is a sociopolitical act.

The social perspectives I discuss are, at root, forms of democratic education — that is, they concern the ways in which teaching art can promote democratic thought and action. At least four general foundations underpin these perspectives: a) a broadening of the domain of art education, b) a shift in the emphasis of teaching from formalistic concerns to the construction of meaning, c) the importance of social contexts to that construction, and d) a new definition of and emphasis on critique.

## Visual Culture: Broadening the Domain

The central theme of postmodern debates, especially in the form exemplified by the work of Frederic Jameson (1984; 1991), has been that a shift in the cultural sphere—above all, the emergence of an all-encompassing visual culture—has fundamentally transformed the nature of political discourse, social interaction, and cultural identity. Visual culture is expanding as is the realm of the visual arts. It includes fine art, television, film and video, computer technology, fashion photography, advertising, and so on. The increasing pervasiveness of such forms of visual culture, and the freedom with which these forms cross traditional borders, can be seen in the use of fine art in advertising, realistic computer generated characters in films, and video museum exhibitions.

In part, freedom in a contemporary democracy is reflected precisely through the ways in which the visual arts cross traditional artistic and social boundaries. For example, artists recycle gendered ideals. Historically, the fine arts have been replete with idealized representations of gender. But now, through contemporary visual culture translations (many of which are rooted in fine art depictions), those idealistic representations are sold with products that promise to give people qualities of the ideals. These idealized images have come to represent the dualism associated with, on the one hand, the individualism and artistic freedom of the avant-garde and, on the other hand, the pervasiveness of gender stereotypes that only the visual arts can make possible. We see this dualism in, for example, clothing, perfume, and cosmetic advertisements suggesting that buying a product will make us more individual, while fitting us better into the stereotype.

It is not only the mix of visual cultural forms that will shape art education in the new century, but the intergraphical connections between them. For example, the advertisements discussed in the previous paragraph are perhaps more closely related to historical, fine art representations of beauty than to contemporary realities. It is the conceptual and physical interactions of various images, forms of imagery, and their meanings, that are the essence of the visual arts.

## Form and the Interpretation of Meaning

The variety and connections between different forms of visual culture in the postmodern age leads us to the second foundation of social perspectives, which is the shift in emphasis from mainly formalistic concerns to interpretations of meaning. While meaning has always been vital to art, it has not always been reflected as so in education. Instead, curriculum has focused on form and technical skill, as opposed to content. As John Dewey wrote in 1916 in *Democracy and Education*:

It is frequently stated that a person learns by merely having the qualities of things impressed upon his mind through the gateway of the senses. Having received a store of sensory impressions, association or some power of mental synthesis is supposed to combine them into ideas - into things with a meaning...The difference between an adjustment to a physical stimulus and a mental act is that the latter involves response to a thing in its meaning; the former does not...When things have a meaning to us, we mean (intend, propose) what we do: when they do not, we act blindly, unconsciously, unintelligently. (*italics in the original, p. 29*)

Artist Ben Shahn (1957), an art educator with a social perspective, explained the problem in relation to teaching:

In the midst of our discussion one of the students walked up to me and said, Mr. Shahn, I didn't come here to learn philosophy. I just want to learn how to paint. I asked him which one of the one hundred and forty styles he wanted to learn, and we began to establish, roughly, a sort of understanding.

I could teach him how to mix colors, or how to manipulate oils or tempera or watercolor. But I certainly could not teach him any style of painting - at least I wasn't going to. Style today is the shape of one's meanings. It is developed with an aesthetic view and a set of intentions. It is not the how of painting but the why. (*italics in the original, p. 123*)

It is no surprise, then, that theory grounded in the construction of social meaning has had an impact on social perspectives of art education. As a

result, the influence of hermeneutics, originally the study of meaning interpreted from scripture, has been at the root of much of this theory. Other theories on which social perspectives have been grounded have emerged from, for example, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy, as well as the arts. These range from neo-Marxism to post-structuralism. I cannot do justice to a description of each theoretical framework here, but an example of the shift in thinking about interpretation can serve to illustrate some of the issues involved.

The mainstream conception of interpretation in U.S. curriculum is based on analytic aesthetics and establishes a boundary conflict: form versus meaning. Historically, analytic aesthetics enabled the emergence of formalism, which carries with it the assumption that aesthetic experience is a mere sensory coupling with elements and principles of design, not the meaningful, interpretive (cognitive) experience that makes art fundamental to human existence.

In contrast, in an increasing body of contemporary theory and artistic practice, meaning is inherent to aesthetics and interested interpretations are not only expected, but promoted. Postmodern artists often reject formalistic uses of the elements and principles of design in favor of symbolic uses that suggest multiple and extended social meanings. For example, in the piece *Us-Them* by Gary Simmons, the artist uses two black towels hanging on a rack, one with the word *Us* embroidered on it in gold, and the other with the word *Them* to suggest meaning. Simmons refers to the typically white *His* and *Hers* towels associated with wealth, but changes an element (the color) from white to black, which symbolically references the many meanings people have of these colors, and changes the text to *Us* and *Them*. He juxtaposes color with ideas of elitism, gender, and social conflict, suggested by the objects and the words, so that the color black suggests the word (Black) and the word suggests and combines with knowledge, feelings, and beliefs about racial tension. In other words, Simmons uses color for symbolic reasons rather than formalistic. As a result, formalism would not go far in helping students gain access to the piece. Instead, color is a sign that suggests meaning based on social experience.

## Contexts: The Importance of People

This leads me to the third foundation of social perspectives: contexts. Without context, a painting is just paint on canvas. With context, a painting is a work of art. As well as its surface form and content, it is about the people who created it, viewed it, showed it, bought it, studied it, and criticized it. As a result, both contexts of production and appreciation or use are important. (I use the traditional word appreciation here because it refers to the seductiveness of visual culture and its increasing value.) Such contexts include cultures, countries, communities, institutions, including schools themselves, and the sociopolitical conditions under which art is made, seen, and studied. Contexts include theories and models, such as the models of aesthetics, childhood, and curriculum that shape our views about art and teaching. Contexts also include the conditions and environments that make student art possible, from what students see every day to sources of their emotions, opinions, and beliefs.

Although, of course, many individual teachers represent wider contexts of production in their teaching, a review of the history of art education and most contemporary published curriculum packages reveals that such contexts have not generally been represented as important in our field. For decades, sociologists have understood that the contexts of art and other cultural carriers contribute to their symbolic, attached meanings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Contexts of production are part of works of art; they provide the conceptual connections that make art worth studying. And yet, some art educators still argue that understanding contexts of production is peripheral to understanding art. Of course, I have often seen works of fine art presented in the context of a fine art style (usually as a formal, rather than a social, context). However, I have rarely seen, for example, explanations of French Impressionism including the importance of artists being able to leave their studios for the first time on trains for quick trips to the countryside to paint, of the sociology of World War II to Abstract Expressionism, of the intended rites and rituals associated with ceremonial masks, or even the role education plays in artistic communities.

Also, contexts of appreciation or use have not generally been given attention in curriculum. Images are now often seen without the context of their

original intent and juxtaposed with previously unrelated imagery that provoke associations created by this new context. The various modes of reproduction that enable viewing on a large scale are productive in the sense that they involve the creation of a new object each time an object is reproduced. The contexts of museums, television programs, advertisements, as well as school curriculum, all influence the ways in which a single work of fine art (and through the exemplar, fine art as a concept) is understood.

From an educational standpoint, it would be unwise to assume that images are held as mere forms (formal objects) in students' minds — when students do not have contextual information, they construct their own contexts, thereby forming their own knowledge. This was illustrated in a study I did with high school teacher John Wood where students discussed, for example, a painting of two Eastern Indian gods as if it represented an interracial couple (Freedman & Wood, 1999). The students did not know that in the time and place it was painted, lighter skin was considered aesthetically pleasing for women and darker skin was desired for men. The painting actually represented an ideal aesthetic of a single racial couple, which could have taught them something about the relativity of skin color, the use of artistic form as a representation of ideals, and so on. Instead, the students interpreted the piece in relation to their own (unfortunately, racist) context.

Occasionally, I am asked why social perspectives of art education are not social studies. The answer should seem clear — art education is about visual culture, which is vital in a world where students of all ages are increasingly learning from visual sources ranging from television to manga. Even so, from my perspective, students need to know non-visual aspects of visual culture, if for no other reason than because greater general knowledge can reveal the importance of the visual.

### Critique: The Constructive Process of Democracy

The fourth foundation of social perspectives is the importance of critique based on various types of critical social theory. To provide context, I start with a few historical notes. The critical theory turn in U.S. art education, and general education, has its recent theoretical roots in the 1960s. Two strains of critical theory from other countries particularly influenced U.S. thinking



about art and education. The first was European neo-Marxist theory, particularly the work of critical sociologists of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno who wrote on aesthetics. The second strain was Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's theory that grew out of efforts to promote literacy and borrowed from John Dewey's pragmatism and ideas about progressive education. These social theories were vehicles for responding to political and economic oppression. In part, their translation in the United States was a response to the personal isolation of existentialism and the extreme individualism that developed after the Second World War, as a result of fears of authoritarianism and anti-Communist sentiments. These theories were drawn on in general education to address problems of increased asocial, technization of curriculum, such as the development of teacher proof curriculum. The historicism of the Frankfurt School provided a way of escaping the ahistorical grip of logical positivism and reconnecting various modern practices to their traditions. In art theory, the conceptual shift from modernism to postmodernism supported artists as they revisited social content and revealed historical connections to their art and popular culture.

By the 1970s, the U.S. version of neo-Marxist theory and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed became entangled in education with feminist and cultural theory related to civil rights. Ideas were taken from each and adapted to fit into U.S. contexts. For example, U.S. poststructuralists and other postmodernists rejected Marxism as a meta-narrative and feminists and cultural theoreticians pointed out that neo-Marxist theory, although helpful in uncovering historical dimensions of oppression related to economics, did little to aid in the understanding of complex cultural, social, and personal issues. In the 1980s, when people used the term critical theory referring to education, it had a range of meanings from poststructuralism's challenge to the notion of a single, correct or even best structure (composition, interpretation, lesson plan, etc.) to analyses of curriculum based on the socioeconomic conditions of certain populations. However, all referred to critical reflection at a social level.

By the 1980s critical social theory became part of the discourse of art education and fueled the growth of social perspectives of the field. In part, the fuel came from the work of art educators who had grown up in the 1950s

and 1960s and belonged to the group of Americans who as youngsters had taken part in civil rights marches and demonstrations against the Viet Nam War. Their convictions about the relationship between aesthetic meaning, civil rights, and social justice were long held and strongly felt

While enabling change in conceptions of art education, concerns about the influence of critical social theory have floated around in the air of the field since the 1980s. This is the case, in part, because critical discourse is thought to have a negative quality. Phrases that now float in the air of the visual, performing, and literary arts like "death of the author," and "the end of art history," may sound a bit scary and some social theory is critical in the deconstructive sense. But these can be looked at as metaphorical ways to jolt people into understanding that profound changes have occurred in the visual arts — that art educators are responsible for representing — and that these changes are social in character. Of course, artistship is alive and well, but perhaps, in a more social form, where the content of fine art, television programs, and even advertising imagery are about social issues, artists sign paintings in pairs, and kinetic sculptures and room-sized installations only become art through audience interaction. Art still has a past — but art history is no longer based on a single, linear, progressive, monocultural model. Rather, art lives in a four-dimensional space where cultures collide and intermingle and time works back on itself.

Critical social theory is a form of critique and critique is a constructive force in arts communities precisely because it opens discussion that might otherwise be closed. Many types of critique exist, such as, classroom critique in which teachers try to get responsive comments from students that reflect formalistic lesson objectives. However, from a social perspective, critique helps participants not only to make judgments and reflect on their own positions, but to realize that the discourse of their positions, the critique, the curriculum, the field, and so on, create a social milieu of possibility. Art educators (e.g. Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Freedman, 1987) who work from social perspectives generally tend to view critique in and about our field as a democratic process.

Social Perspectives: Past and Present

Reconstructionism has long been one of the three major streams of art education in the United States (Efland, 1990). Interestingly, social reconstructionism in general education has a history closely tied to art. This might best be represented by the work of educator Harold Rugg who joined the faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York shortly after WWI and quickly became influential through his interpretation of progressive education. Rugg's conception of schooling was the radical perspective that education was a route to political, social, and economic change. One of the influences on Rugg was Greenwich Village culture and the circle that surrounded Alfred Stieglitz and Georgia O'Keeffe (including artists such as John Marin, Arthur Dove, and Ansel Adams, and critics such as Waldo Frank and Lewis Mumford). In part, as a result of this influence, Rugg considered art an essential part of social reconstructionism in general education.

Although the stream of social reconstructionism in art education has flowed throughout the twentieth century, it now seems to be the wave of the future. In the last three decades social perspectives have broadened beyond the reconstructionism of the past. These perspectives now include a range, for example, from general methods of art education that include sociocultural issues not necessarily tied to reconstructionist methods or purposes, such as in the work of Edmund Feldman, to specific concerns of certain social groups in relation to art education. Such concerns have received increased attention in art education literature, conferences, and NAEA affiliate groups (such as the Committee on Multiethnic Concerns, INSEA/USSEA, the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues Caucus, the Social Theory Caucus, and the Women's Caucus). From the writing of national and international art educators, such as June King McFee and Rogena Degge, Eugene Grigsby, Ana Mae Barbosa, Vincent Lanier, Brent and Marjorie Wilson, Graeme Chalmers, and Ronald Neperud, in the 1960s and 1970s, to the many who have joined them since, sociocultural issues have made teaching art worthwhile.

## Recent Research and Theory

In the 1980s and 1990s, several foci of social perspectives surfaced to become areas of research, including those giving attention to particular social groups, such as people of special ability (e.g. Blandy, 1994), and gen-

der, such as gay and lesbian (e.g. Check, 1998) issues. Many of these issues were introduced in Blandy and Congdon's (1987) edited volume, *Art in a Democracy*. The influence of women educators, women's art, and feminism has become an area of study, from the seminal book by Georgia Collins and Renee Sandell (1986) to the series of histories edited by Enid Zimmerman and her co-editors (e.g. Congdon & Zimmerman, 1993) and Collins (1995) *Studies in Art Education Award Lecture*. This work has demonstrated that women have been highly influential in the field and that further studies of influence are needed in order to promote an understanding of the conditions of influence of social groups.

An important aspect of the concern with social groups has to do with the inclusion of the art of diverse people in curriculum and attention to the diversity of students, including ethnic diversity. Art educators such as Jackie Chanda (1991), Phoebe Dufrene (e.g. 1990; 1993), Patricia Stuhr (e.g. 1991; 1994), and other scholars have worked to change curriculum so that the art of various cultures are presented in their appropriate complexity. This work includes empirical investigations of educational issues concerning the art and cultures of many cultural groups, such as first nations peoples (e.g. Stuhr, 1987; Irwin, Rogers, & Wan, 1997).

With the increasing interest in fine art disciplines has come a major effort to update representations of art history, criticism, aesthetics, and studio forms of production. Attempts to update curriculum representations of fine art are desperately needed and must go beyond what has been done to date. The attempts that have been made have sought to make education have greater consistency with the shift toward social issues that has occurred in visual arts communities (e.g. Congdon, 1986; Freedman, 1991a; Garber, 1992; 1995; Hamblen, 1988; 1990). However, much more work must be done to synthesize contemporary art concepts and skills for inclusion in curriculum if we are to legitimately continue to include fine art in curriculum.

Much of the work in the development of social perspectives has been in the forms of philosophical essays that concern the ethics of art education and what ought to happen in and through curriculum. However, foundations for social perspectives have also been based on empirical research in classrooms (e.g. Freedman & Wood, 1998; Stout, 1995) and have included other

forms of inquiry, such as social history (e.g. Freedman, 1987; 1991b) and political analysis (e.g. Boughton, 1998; Hernandez, 1998; May, 1994). More empirical work is needed both as a foundation for social perspectives and to establish what occurs in classrooms when social perspectives are enacted.

The social shift has included a broadening of the field to include all the visual arts including folk art, performance, environment, and computer-assisted-art (e.g. Congdon, 1991; Duncum, 1990, 1991; Freedman, 1989; Garoian; 1996; Hicks, 1992/93, 1994; Smith-Shank, 1996). Further, the breadth of visual arts that co-exist and influence student artistic production in the postmodern world demands a social reconsideration of assessment and evaluation (Boughton, 1997). The recent attention given to understanding visual culture is not synonymous with social perspectives of art education. However, they are related. It is the recent changes in visual culture and their relationship to social conditions that give social perspectives of art education their urgency and may be one of the reasons for the increased interest in both understanding visual culture and reconstructionism in our field.

I do not wish to unnecessarily categorize the work of individuals and it is not my purpose to make minute distinctions between the conceptual locations of people who have social perspectives of art education. Rather, my description is of the landscape within which those locations might be found. But it is not only the actions of writing books and articles that characterize this group. It is their work in schools and local communities, with teachers and other educators, graduate students, members of various arts communities, international communities, and even on the web that mark this group as agents for social change.

### Student-Eye Views

Social perspectives of art education are always concerned with student learning and art knowledge. Students make art to express not only things about themselves, but about their surroundings, their social context, the things that act upon them. Students generate social ideas about art. For example, the following is a list of art topics generated by a sixth grade class:

Love Marriage Sex Aids Murder Hate Killing Battles Freedom Family  
Friends Relationships Celebrations Holidays Spirituality God Beliefs

Culture Drugs Peace War Pollution Earth Ecology Work Feelings  
Hunger

Students make visual art not merely for its formal, technical, or even private value, but to communicate about social issues in social ways. This was illustrated in a sculpture I recently saw made by a student in middle school after she was raped. This sculpture was one of the most powerful works of art I have ever seen. Although the student's experience was private, her method of responding to it was public and her message was social. Students have concerns, they ask questions, interpret imagery, and make judgments. They make works of art that illustrate social injustice, community change, and concern for the environment.

The primary purpose of such student art is not therapeutic — it is social. It is not just about individual emotions, it is about the personalization of social issues. The complexity of this, perhaps subtle, difference is critical if we intend to teach students about art in relation to their world.

As well as presenting art as a form of social production, it has been my experience that social perspectives of art education include the view that vital learning takes place in relation to classroom culture. Student interpretation is valued, as well as challenged, and expert opinion is represented as part of a negotiated system of information, rather than a deliverable object. As Maxine Greene (1996) states, In the realm of the arts, as in other realms of meaning, learning goes on most fruitfully in atmospheres of interchange and shared discoveries (p.126). These perspectives promote dialogue that relates objects and ideas formed in class to the cultural identities, social actions, and multiple discourses of art that live outside of school—not only those by fine art experts. Those who teach from a social perspective help students in the construction of meaning toward a broader, more sophisticated understanding of visual culture.

### Art as Social Knowledge and Belief

Art is a vital part and contributor to social life and students have the possibility of learning about life through art. At its root, the purposes of art education is not to merely educate people about the technical and formal qualities of artifacts, but to help to extend the meaning of those qualities and artifacts to

show their importance in human existence. It is this relevance that has made art worthy of a place in formal education.

I have had the privilege of spending most of my sabbatical during the past year overseas, including in some newly developing countries. I have learned a great deal about local and global communities, students and teachers in various contexts, and the social production of art. One lesson has been continually reinforced: art education is increasingly important in societies built on expressive freedom that are rapidly shifting from text-based communication to image saturation. No educational group outside of art education is prepared to teach students about the complexities of the increasingly pervasive visual arts. And no group, including ourselves, is yet prepared to address the educational implications of a visual aesthetic that is both sophisticated and popular.

## Social Responsibility and the Pervasiveness of Visual Culture

Television has become our national curriculum. More students watch a nationally broadcast television program than are taught through the same curriculum text. Highly seductive and widely distributed images with sophisticated aesthetics intricately tied to sociopolitical meaning are now seen every day by students. As a result of telecommunications, students learn from and about the visual arts through a virtual curriculum. Literal and conceptual, intertextual and intergraphical connections between television, the web, and other visual technologies, such as film, photography, and video, are expanding this learning environment.

An important part of postmodern art and art education involves these connections between and among the forms of visual culture seen in museums, on television, in movies, as part of video and computer games, on the Web, on packaging, and so forth. As Ellen Dissanayake (1988) argues, art is used across cultures to make special. In the contemporary democracies which promote the free flow of information this idea of making special has been appropriated by the mass media, advertising, and even education, as exemplified in the use of the arts to aid student learning in other school subjects. The same techniques that artists have used for centuries to make

imagery seductive, didactic, and powerful, are being used today on the grandest of scales.

From my social perspective, it is the responsibility of our field to address the issues and problems of student experience with visual culture. Unlike the strongest traditions of our field, which have focused heavily on promoting an appreciation of the visual arts of the past, art education from this perspective is concerned with taking a more critical stance and addressing the increasingly difficult challenges of the visual arts in the future. Even when the future of the visual arts involves recycling the past, they present new challenges to new audiences, like our students.

### The Example of a New Democracy

In case anyone doubts the pervasiveness of these changing conditions concerning the visual arts, and the importance of responses by art educators, let me give you an example from Kyrgystan, a country that was previously part of the Soviet Union. The educators in this country are struggling to construct a democratic system of education appropriate for the Kyrgyz people. The old Soviet curriculum continues to be resistant to change. Many of the officials in the ministry, where curriculum at all levels must be approved, are of the old regime. And yet, through the untiring efforts of a few Kyrgyz educators, reform has begun to emerge in a relatively short period of time.

One of the changes that has emerged is the rejection of the heroic story of Lenin and the promotion of the story of Manas, the historical epoch of the Kyrgyz people. It is a poem of more than half a million lines that was oral history for centuries and was probably first recorded in the 13th century. The poem tells the story of a great leader's exploits. As was the case with the story of Lenin, students learn about Manas in every school grade level.

The centuries old story contains many ideals that might be easily translated in a democratic environment. Manas is considered an example of honesty, generosity, and wisdom. However, as with most things of importance, the solution to a problem has raised new problems. One of the educational tools used to teach the story of Manas is a powerful, dramatic video tape (a work of art) with actors playing characters in the poem against a backdrop of special effects. It illustrates the poem and in the process shows, in vivid



imagery, historical traditions of sexism, racism, and violence. Such visual representations of Manas are already being used outside of school, too. I saw a television commercial in which an actor portraying Manas was selling chocolate. However, the complex influence of these images has yet to be addressed in this new democracy where little formal art education exists.

Artistic freedom has always been a condition, even a defining term, of democracy. But now, the characteristic form of artistic freedom is visual and the power of easily accessible visual arts has become a generator for democratic culture (in all its definitions). In this context, the intersection of the range of visual arts with social meaning is not, for example, propaganda or any other form of imagery previously considered peculiar or different from art. Instead, this intersection is just normal life at the turn of the 21st century—and it is the topic of art education.

## Conclusion

I have argued that art must be represented in education as a social statement, in a social context, from social perspectives. A conceptual, social space exists between images through which people make contact. Learning takes place when students visit this virtual space as they study paintings and photographs in social studies texts, watch television shows that reproduce violence in films, see ads that recycle fine art, talk with friends about rock videos that simulate computer games, and so on.

We have a great deal of work to do in this new artistic renaissance called the information age. An essential responsibility of our field in the up-coming century will be to teach students about the power of the visual arts and the freedoms and responsibilities that come with that power. If we are astute, we will spend less time arguing about the structural character of curriculum and more time on its meanings; we will focus less on national and state bordered guidelines and more on local and global communities; we will be less concerned with the technical qualities of art and more concerned with its reasons for being; and above all, we will focus less on teaching students what we were taught and more on what they need to know. In this way, we will lead, rather than follow, general educational trends and help people understand life in the context of the visual arts.

I wish to thank the people I have cited who have social perspectives of art education and the many others who have helped to move art education forward in a social direction. It is a more enriching, critical, and interesting field because of you---you who understand art as above all of, by, and for the people.

### Author's Notes

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1999 annual meeting of the National Art Education Association in Washington, D.C. The presentation contained slide images that were important to its message, but could not be reproduced here.

Parts of this paper were written while I was in residence as a Visiting Professor in the College of Fine Art, University of New South Wales, and in the Art Education Program at the University of Barcelona. I wish to thank my hosts, Amanda Weate and Fernando Hernandez and their institutions for their kind support and comments. I also wish to thank Patricia Stuhr for her comments on an earlier draft.

The student examples discussed here, and those shown during the presentation of this paper, came from the classrooms of three outstanding art teachers, Barbara Bridges, Virginia Kressin, and Cleveland Eady, whom it has been my privilege to teach.

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# 美國藝術教育中之社會面向： 民主社會的視覺文化教學<sup>1</sup>

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## 摘要

本文綜論藝術教育之社會面向，包括但不限於性別、種族、族群、性傾向、特別能力及其他個人認同與文化方面的議題與互動；社經及政治條件、社區、自然及人為環境（包括虛擬環境）。這裡我特別強調各面向共同的立足點，乃是基於我深信視覺藝術對任何社會都極其重要，而教育中的藝術學科應該致力於反映藝術之複雜、多元及文化上的整體定位。這些面向代表藝術及藝術社群在實際生活中的意義，例如透過課程之改變、集體合作教學法，以及社區行動。從社會重建角度來探討這些面向，也是基於我相信藝術教育能夠影響學生的世界觀，改變學生的行動，而差異則能夠豐富我們的社會生活。

## 藝術教育的社會面向：民主社會中的視覺文化教學

本文綜論藝術教育之社會面向，目的不在評論，但也不可能完全中立，而是

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<sup>1</sup> 本文經作者及美國藝術教育協會授權，轉載自藝術教育研究（第42卷第4期）

希望有系統的描述藝術教育的這些面向，說明我從中觀察到的一些重要情況、特色及目的。

要描述這些面向並不容易，因為社會面向太多了，包括但不限於性別、種族、族群、性傾向、特別能力及其他個人認同與文化方面的議題與互動；社經及政治條件、社區、自然及人為環境（包括虛擬環境）。但這些面向共同的立足點，乃是基於我深信視覺藝術對任何社會都極其重要，而教育中的視覺藝術學科應該致力反映藝術之複雜、多元及文化上的整體定位。這些面向代表藝術及藝術社群在實際生活中的意義，例如透過課程之改變、集體合作教學法，以及社區行動。從社會重建角度來探討這些面向，也是基於我相信藝術教育能夠影響學生的世界觀，改變學生的行動，而差異則能夠豐富我們的社會生活。

當然我的意見無法代表所有致力於藝術與藝術教育的教育人士，也不可能完全充分說明這許多不同的面向；我也無意將這些面向分門別類或區分其間的差異。我更關心的是瞭解各面向之間共同點，而藝術教育中又為什麼要維持社會面向。所以，我首先簡短描述一般的特色，說明我為什麼認為藝術教育的社會面向與藝術教育同樣重要。

本文分為三部分，首先是概述這些面向中，我所認為的重要理論基礎；其次是簡述藝術教育領域中相關的歷史及晚近的發展；最後則探討視覺文化中最近的一些變化，何以促使我提出社會面向。

## 民主的藝術教育：一些理論基礎

視覺藝術可說是有助於增加人生的價值，讓我們能夠創造，促使我們思考，帶給我們各種新的可能，從舊觀念中找出新意。或許藝術的自由（也就是創作的自由，能夠接觸這些開闊心胸的觀念與事物）最能說明民主思想。今天的民主甚至受到我們自己的決策人士所挑戰，因此，在有些社會機制中，保護藝術與藝術教育就愈形重要。

美國人所寫的文章中，下面這段話經常有人引述：

吾人相信這些真理不辯自明，亦即人皆生而平等，享有不可剝奪之權利，其中包括生命、自由及追求幸福等權利。

這段話是美國憲法第二段開宗明義所揭示的，也正說明了民主社會中何



以需要視覺藝術與藝術教育。如果將藝術與藝術教育視為有助於增進生命的意義，視為自由之反映，視為追求建設性之幸福的一個方式，那麼藝術教育就是一項社會政治行為。

我所討論的社會面向，歸根究柢就是民主教育的不同形式，也就是說，如何透過藝術教學培養民主思想與行動。這些面向至少具有四項共通的基礎：一，擴大藝術教育的領域；二，教學重點從形式主義趨向於意義之建構；三、建構過程中對社會背景脈絡的重視；四、對批評重新定義，也更加重視。

## 視覺文化：擴大領域

後現代論述的中心主旨，尤其是 Frederic Jameson (1984; 1991) 所提出的形式，就在於文化領域的轉變（特別是出現了無所不含的視覺文化）根本改變了政治言談、社會互動、文化認同等等之本質。視覺文化不斷在擴展，視覺藝術的領域也是一樣，包含視覺藝術、電視、影片、電腦科技、時裝攝影、廣告等等。視覺文化這種種的形式愈來愈普遍，而且不斷跨越傳統的分野，例如將藝術應用於廣告、影片中電腦合成的角色栩栩如生、影像藝術館展覽等等。

當代民主社會中的自由，一部分正是反映於視覺藝術能夠跨越傳統的藝術分野與社會分野。例如，藝術家再度利用性別的理想。歷史上，藝術中關於理想的男性、女性，出現過無數的描繪。但是現在透過當代視覺文化的轉移（其中許多是從藝術的描繪所衍生而來），這些理想形象隨著商品一起出售，承諾將理想的特質帶給消費者。這些理想形象成了二元觀點的代表，一方面是前衛的個人主義與藝術自由，另一方面又產生流行的性別刻板印象，這是唯有視覺藝術才可能導致的結果。這種二元觀點到處可見，例如服飾、香水和化妝品廣告告訴我們，購買某個產品能夠增添個人特色，同時卻又讓我們更符合既有的刻板印象。

新世紀中，影響藝術教育的不只是視覺文化的各種形式，同時還包括各形式之間的圖像關聯。例如，前面談到的廣告與歷史、藝術形象之間的關聯，也許比當代的現實更加密切。視覺藝術的核心，就是不同的影像、圖像形式、其中意義彼此之間，在觀念上及實際上的互動關聯。

## 形式與意義之詮釋

從後現代視覺文化各種形式之多變與關聯，可以看到各社會面向的第二個基礎，也就是從過去重視形式，轉變為更關切意義之詮釋。雖然意義對於藝術一向很重要，但卻不一定反映於教育中。過去的課程著重於形式與技巧，而非內容；John Dewey 於 1916 年的《民主與教育》一書中寫道：

常常有人說，人只要透過感官，對於事物的特質留下一點印象，就能夠學習了。而累積了足夠的感官印象、聯想或心理分析能力，就能夠結合成為觀念、成為有意義的事物……。適應具體的刺激，與心理行為並不相同，因為心理行為必須根據事物的意義做回應，適應刺激則不然……。事物如果對我們有意義，我們的行為就是有意的（意圖、目的），否則就只是盲目、無意識的行為。（黑體標示為原文所加，29 頁）

藝術家 Ben Shahn (1957) 也關切藝術教育中的社會面向，他談到社會面向與教學的關聯：

我們討論到一半，一個學生走過來對我說：「老師，我不是來上哲學課的，我只是想學怎麼作畫。」我問他，在 140 種風格當中，他要學哪一種？於是我們之間開始建立了一點瞭解。

我可以教他怎麼調色，怎麼運用油彩、蛋彩或水彩，但我絕不可能教他任何作畫的風格。至少我不打算教他。今天所謂的風格，就是一個人的意義，由美學觀點與各種意圖所建構的；不是怎麼畫，而是為什麼。（黑體標示為原文所加，123 頁）

也難怪以社會意義之建構為基礎的理論，會對藝術教育的社會面向造成影響。結果，詮釋學（原本是研究《聖經》經文的意義）的影響，就成了這個理論的主要基礎。社會面向的其他理論則是基於政治學、經濟、社會、考古、語言學與哲學，以及藝術。從新馬克斯主義到後結構主義，我不可能一一描述各學說的理論架構，但是關於詮釋觀念的改變，即可說明其中涉及的議題。

美國對於課程之解讀，主流觀念是基於分析美學，同時形成了界限之衝突，亦即形式與意義之分。就歷史而言，分析美學促成了形式主義興起。形式主義乃假設「美學經驗」只不過是感官接觸到設計的元素與原理，而非有

意義、詮釋上（認知）的經驗，因此藝術也就不是人類生存之根本條件。

相較之下，當代理論與藝術實務中，愈來愈多人認為「意義乃美學內在本然的特質」，根據各自的觀點所做的詮釋不但合理，也是應該的。後現代的藝術家往往不願將設計元素與原則做形式主義的應用，而偏向於象徵的應用，呈現多元、延伸的社會意義。例如 Gary Simmons 在作品《我們—他們》中，以兩條黑毛巾掛在架子上，一條繡著金色的「我們」，另一條繡著「他們」，以呈現其意義。白毛巾「他的」與「她的」一向代表財富，但 Simmons 改變了一項元素（色彩），從白色換成黑色，這兩個顏色具有多重的象徵意義，他也將文字換成「我們」與「他們」。於是，毛巾與其上的文字除了色彩之外，更兼具菁英主義、性別、社會衝突等意涵，黑色代表黑人，結合了有關種族緊張關係的知識、情感與信念。換句話說，Simmons 的色彩運用是為象徵目的，而非形式主義的目的。因此，要幫助學生瞭解這幅作品，形式主義的作用有限。此時色彩成爲一個象徵符號，呈現社會經驗的意義。

### 背景脈絡：人的重要性

於是我們要談到社會面向的第三個基礎：背景脈絡。若沒有背景脈絡，一幅畫只是畫布上的顏料；有了背景脈絡，一幅畫就成了一件藝術品，除了表面的形式與內容，更涉及創作者、觀賞者、展示者、購買者、研究者、批評者。因此，創作與賞析兩方面的背景脈絡都很重要。（在此我採用傳統的「賞析」一詞，因為可以指涉視覺文化的誘惑力及愈來愈豐富的價值。）這類背景脈絡包括文化、國家、社區、機構（包括學校本身），以及藝術創作、觀賞、研究等等之社會政治條件。背景脈絡包括理論與模式，例如美學模式、童年與課程等等，塑造了我們對於藝術與教學的觀念。背景脈絡也包括使學生藝術成爲可能的種種條件、環境，從學生日常所見，到他們的情感、意見、信念等等之來源，都涵蓋在內。

當然，許多教師在教學上能夠呈現較豐富的創作背景，但是檢討藝術教育的歷史及當代最新出版的課程，即可看出創作背景在藝術教育界普遍並不受重視。數十年來，社會學家都瞭解藝術與其他文化媒介的背景脈絡，會影響其象徵、附加的意義 (Berger & Luckmann, 1967)。創作背景是藝術作品的一環，使作品具有概念上的連結而值得研究。然而，有些藝術教育人士仍然

認為，瞭解創作背景對於瞭解藝術只是次要的。當然，藝術作品呈現在藝術風格的背景中（通常是形式上的背景，而非社會背景），是很普遍的情形。但我卻很少看到法國印象派作品的解析中，提到這是藝術家首度離開畫室，搭上火車到鄉間去作畫；或是二次世界大戰的社會現狀，對於抽象表現派的影響；節慶面具所代表的儀式與習俗，或甚至教育在藝術圈的角色。

同樣的，賞析或應用的背景，在課程中通常也不受重視。我們所看到的影像，往往跳脫了創作者原本所構想的脈絡，與本來毫無關聯的意象並列出現，形成新的背景脈絡，激發新的聯想。各種不同的複製模式，使大規模的觀看成為可能，可說是極具「生產」的功能，因為一個物件每經過一次複製，也就是創造了新物件。美術館、電視節目、廣告、學校課程等等背景脈絡，都會影響我們如何瞭解一件藝術作品（以及透過這個例子所建立的「藝術」觀念）。

從教育上來說，以為影像在學生心目中只是形式（形式上的物件），是不明智的；學生如果沒有背景資料，他們就會建構自己的背景，形成他們自己的知識。以前我做過一項研究 (Freedman & Wood, 1999)，正可以說明這一點。我與高中教師 John Wood 合作，讓學生討論一幅東印度神祇的繪畫，畫中的兩名神祇看似一對異族通婚的夫妻。學生並不知道這幅畫創作當時，認為女人膚色愈白愈美，男人的膚色則要比較黑。畫中其實是描繪出同族中理想的俊男美女，呈現出膚色是相對的，以及透過藝術形式表現理想觀念等等。結果，學生以他們自己的背景（不幸的是種族歧視的背景）來解釋這幅畫。

有時候有人會問我，為什麼藝術教育的社會面向不等於社會研究，我想理由應該非常明白—藝術教育談的是視覺文化，在今天這個時代，視覺文化尤其重要，各年齡層的學生接受資訊的來源，從電視到漫畫，愈來愈偏向於視覺。即使如此，我認為學生還是需要瞭解視覺文化中視覺以外的層面，最起碼，一般知識愈豐富，愈能夠凸顯視覺的重要性。

## 批評：民主的建設性過程

社會面向的第四個基礎，是根據不同類型之批判性社會理論以進行批評的重要性。為確立背景，我先從一些歷史談起。美國藝術教育及一般教育中的批評理論，晚近是源於1960年代的發展。國外傳入的批評理論中，有兩派對於

美國的藝術及教育思維影響尤其重大；首先是歐洲的新馬克斯理論，尤其是法蘭克福學派社會學家的著作，例如 Theodor Adorno 有關美學的論述。其次是巴西教育學者 Paulo Freire 的理論，他因提倡識字而歸納出自己的教育理論，並借用 John Dewey 的務實論及進步教學法等觀念。這些社會理論成爲改變政治及經濟壓迫的工具，後經翻譯引介至美國，其中部分原因是二次世界大戰後的反獨裁及反共心態下，存在主義及極端個人主義盛行，造成個人的孤立感。教育界援引這些理論，以因應課程中日益反社會、重技巧輕內容所衍生的種種問題，例如出現任何教師都可以套用的「公式化課程」。法蘭克福學派的歷史觀，得以彌補理性實證主義中不談歷史的缺點，讓種種現代作爲能夠找回與傳統的關聯。在藝術理論中，從現代主義的觀點轉變至後現代觀點，也讓藝術家能夠重新檢視社會內容，找出歷史與其藝術、與流行文化的關聯。

到1970年代，美國版的新馬克斯理論與 Freire 的「受迫害者教學法」不但流行於教育界，更結合了女性主義及人權方面的文化理論，將這些觀念運用於美國的背景脈絡。例如美國的後結構主義與其他後現代觀念，否定馬克斯主義的「後設敘事」觀，而女性主義及文化理論也指出，新馬克斯主義雖有助於探討壓迫之歷史層面相對於經濟學的問題，但卻無助於瞭解複雜的文化、社會與個人議題。到1980年代，教育上談到批評理論，其實包含許多不同的意涵，從後結構主義挑戰單一結構的觀點，認爲無所謂正確或最好的結構（組成內容、詮釋、教案等），到根據不同學生人口的社經條件所做的課程分析，並無單一的定義。但社會層面的批評檢討，則是其共同的立場。

到1980年代，社會理論已進入美術教育的論述，促使藝術教育中的社會面向逐漸發展。其中部分的動力來自成長於1950及1960年代的藝術教育人士，這一代的美國人參與過爭取人權、反越戰的示威遊行，一向強烈認爲美學意義、人權與社會正義是息息相關的。

批判的社會理論造成1980年代的藝術教育觀念有所轉變，但也有許多人對此影響提出質疑，其中部分理由是認爲批評的論述具有負面特質。視覺藝術、表演藝術、文學中充斥「作者已死」、「歷史已終結」等口號，聽起來可能令人憂心，有些社會理論也傾向於「解構」。但我們也可以將這些看做比喻，目的是爲打破因襲的成見，瞭解視覺藝術已出現重大改變，瞭解藝術教育人士的責任，瞭解這些改變的社會特質。當然，藝術家仍然是藝術家，

但也許在比較社會導向的形式中，藝術內容、電視節目、甚至廣告意象都涉及社會議題時，藝術家不再獨立存在，而運動雕塑和展廳大小的裝置藝術，也唯有透過與觀眾的互動，才得以成為藝術。藝術仍然有其過去，但藝術史已不再基於單一、線性、不斷進展、單文化的模式。如今的藝術存在於四度空間，各文化互相衝擊、交錯，時間也可能倒轉。

批判的社會理論是一種批評，而批評對於藝術界之所以是一股建設性的力量，正是因為能夠促成開放的討論，否則也許不會有這些討論。批評有許多種，例如課堂批評是由教師引導學生表達意見，以反映形式主義的教學目標；但從社會角度來看，批評有助於參與者做判斷、檢視自己的立場，同時更能瞭解這些立場以及批評、課程、領域等等所創造的社會背景，能夠孕育各種可能。從社會面向探討藝術教育的學者（例如 Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Freedman, 1987），通常將藝術教育的批評視為一種民主過程。

## 社會面向：過去與現在

在美國，重建主義一直是藝術教育界三大主流思想之一 (Efland, 1990)。值得注意的是，一般教育中的社會重建主義，與藝術一直密切相關。最明顯的例子也許是教育學者 Harold Rugg 的作品，一次世界大戰後不久，他任職於紐約哥倫比亞大學的師範學院，很快就因為他對進步教學法的觀點而聲名大噪。Rugg 對於學校教育的觀點比較激進，認為教育乃是政治、社會、經濟改革之路。Rugg 所造成的影響包括格林威治村文化（藝文圈文化），以及 Alfred Stieglitz、Georgia O'Keeffe 等人為首的藝文人士（包括 John Marin、Arthur Dove、Ansel Adams 等藝術家，以及 Waldo Frank、Lewis Mumford 等批評家）。也由於這些影響的結果，Rugg 認為藝術是一般教育中社會重建論不可或缺的一環。

雖然整個20世紀當中，社會重建論一直可見於藝術教育，但如今似乎成了未來的潮流。近三十年來，社會面向已大幅擴展，超越過去的重建主義。例如這些社會面向如今包含藝術教育的一般方法，包括與重建論之方法或目的未必有關的社會文化議題，例如 Edmund Feldman 的作品，也包括特定社會群體有關於藝術教育的特定關切議題。這些關切議題在藝術教育文獻、會議、NAEA 相關團體（例如多族裔委員會 Committee on Multiethnic Concerns、INSEA/USSEA、同性戀及雙性戀會議 the Lesbian, Gay, and

Bisexual Issues Caucus、社會理論會議the Social Theory Caucus、女性會議the Women's Caucus），都愈來愈受重視。從國內與國際藝術教育學者的著作（例如1960和1970年代的 June King McFee、Rogena Degge、Eugene Grigsby、Ana Mae Barbosa、Vincent Lanier、Brent and Marjorie Wilson、Graeme Chalmers、Ronald Neperud 等人），到其後許多學者的研究中，社會文化議題讓藝術教學愈來愈有意義。

## 最近的研究與理論

在1980和1990年代，社會面向中出現了數項新的研究焦點，包括以特定社會群體為對象，例如具有特殊才能的人（如 Blandy, 1994），以及性別議題，例如同性戀（如 Check, 1998）。這些議題在 Blandy、Congdon 兩人合編的《民主社會中的藝術》中多所介紹。女性教育人士、女性藝術、女性主義等等影響，也成為一項研究領域，例如 Georgia Collins、Renee Sandell 合著的 seminal book (1986)，Enid Zimmerman 等人合編的歷史系列（如 Congdon & Zimmerman, 1993），以及 Collins 的《藝術教育研究》得獎感言。該書證明女性對於藝術教育界有很大的影響，更需要進一步的研究，以瞭解社會群體的影響條件。

關於社會群體有一個重要層面，就是課程中要涵蓋不同人士的藝術，也要注意學生的不同背景，包括多元種族。藝術教育人士如 Jackie Chanda (1991)、Phoebe Dufrene（如1990；1993）、Patricia Stuhr（如1991；1994）等人，致力於改變課程，以納入不同文化的豐富藝術。他們的努力包括以許多文化群體為對象，就藝術與文化的相關教育議題進行實證探討，例如美洲原住民（如 Stuhr, 1987；Irwin, Rogers, & Wan, 1997）。

藝術各學科日漸受到重視後，各界也開始努力充實藝術史、藝術批評、美學、藝術創作形式等學科的內容。目前我們更迫切需要充實藝術的課程內容，而且必須超越既有的成果。現有的研究著眼於讓教育更加符合視覺藝術圈的轉變，也就是傾向於社會議題（例如 Congdon, 1986；Freedman, 1991a；Garber, 1992；1995；Hamblen, 1988；1990）。然而，我們還需要更多的努力，以整合當代的藝術觀念與技巧，並整合於課程中，才能夠讓藝術繼續名正言順的納入學校課程。

社會面向的發展，很多是透過哲學評論文章的探究，主題包括藝術教育

的倫理、課程內容及目的等等。然而，社會面向的基礎也來自課堂上的觀察研究（如 Freedman & Wood, 1998; Stout, 1995），以及其他形式的探究，例如社會史（如 Freedman, 1987; 1991b）及政治分析（如 Boughton, 1998; Hernandez, 1998; May, 1994）。我們需要更多的經驗研究工作，一方面做為社會面向的基礎，同時也能瞭解將社會面向帶入課堂後，實際上會產生什麼影響。

社會層面的轉變包括藝術教育的範圍擴大了，所有的視覺藝術都包含在內，例如民俗藝術、表演藝術、環境藝術、電腦輔助藝術等（如 Congdon, 1991; Duncum, 1990, 1991; Freedman, 1989; Garoian; 1996; Hicks, 1992/93, 1994; Smith-Shank, 1996）。此外，在後現代世界中，影響學生藝術創作的各種視覺藝術涵蓋範圍既廣，我們對於評量、評鑑的觀念也就必須重新思考（Boughton, 1997）。目前對於瞭解視覺文化的重視，並不等於藝術教育的社會面向，但的確是相關的。正是因為視覺文化及其與社會條件的關係有所轉變，藝術教育中的社會面向才會變成緊要的議題，也可能因而促使藝術教育界更重視視覺文化與重建主義。

我無意贅述個別學者的研究類別，本文目的也不在於區分藝術教育社會面向中，各家理論的細微差異，我是著眼於整體的發展架構。但這個群體的特徵不只是撰文寫書，更投入於校園和地方社區，與教師和其他教育人士、研究生、不同藝術團體的成員、國際社區合作，甚至在網路上大力推動，成為社會改革的尖兵。

## 學生觀點

藝術教育的社會面向，一向關注學生的學習與藝術知識。學生創作藝術不只是為表達與自我有關的一切，也反映其周圍環境、社會背景，這些對他們造成影響的因素。學生也會對藝術形成社會觀念，例如下面是一個六年級的班級所列舉的藝術題目：

愛情、婚姻、性、愛滋病、謀殺、仇恨、殺人、戰爭、自由、家庭、朋友、感情關係、節慶、假日、性靈、上帝、信仰、文化、毒品、和平、污染、地球生態、工作、情感、飢餓

學生創作視覺藝術，不只是為其形式、技巧或甚至個人的價值，同時也



是為傳達有關社會議題的看法。我最近看到的一件雕塑作品，正可以說明這一點。這是一名中學生受到性侵害後所完成的雕塑，是一件非常有力的作品，雖然學生的經驗是個人的，但她的回應方式卻是公開的，她所傳達的訊息是社會的。學生有他們關切的事，會提出問題、解釋意象，也會做自己的判斷。他們的藝術創作反映社會的不公義、社區變化、環境議題等。

這樣的學生藝術，主要目的不在於治療，而是社會層面；不只是關於個人情緒，也是關於社會議題的個人化。這個差別也許細微，但卻極其複雜，更是教導學生藝術與世界之關聯的一大關鍵。

藝術教育的社會面向，除了能夠以社會生產的形式來呈現藝術之外，我也經歷過因為教室文化而有助於重要的學習。學生的詮釋受到重視，也受到挑戰，專家意見則成為資訊協商體系的一環，而不是一個可以傳達的客體。正如 Maxine Greene (1996) 所說：「在藝術的領域，一如其他的意義領域，要達到最佳的學習成效，必須建立起交替互動、共同探索的氣氛 (p. 126)。」這些面向能夠促進對話，使課堂上形成的作品、觀念，能夠與校園外的文化認同、社會行動、多元的藝術論述等有所連繫，而非只有藝術專家的看法。社會面向的教學能夠幫助學生建構意義，對視覺文化達到更寬廣、更成熟的瞭解。

## 以藝術為社會知識及信念

藝術是社會生活重要的一環，貢獻良多，透過藝術，學生也可能增進對人生的瞭解。藝術教育的根本目的，不只是教導藝術作品的技巧、形式特質，而是擴展這些特質及作品的意義，以呈現其對人類存在的價值。正是因為這層關聯，藝術才值得在正式教育中佔有一席之地。

去年我在研究休假期間，有幸大半時間都在海外，包括一些新近發展中的國家。對於地方與全球社區、不同背景脈絡中的師生、藝術之社會生產，我都學到了許多心得。其中有一項看法一再得到印證，也就是在以表達自由為基礎的社會中，原本以文字為主的溝通逐漸轉變為以影像為主流，因而藝術教育愈來愈重要。除了藝術教育界，其他教育團體都不足以教授學生日趨複雜、無所不在的視覺藝術。但所有的團體，包括我們自己，卻都還沒有做好準備，未能因應既複雜又流行的視覺美學在教育上的影響。

## 社會責任與視覺文化之盛行

電視已成為美國的全國課程，收看全國聯播電視節目的學生，多過採用同一本教科書的人數。學生每天都能接觸極具誘惑力、廣為流傳的影像，其中傳達複雜的美學，且結合了複雜的意涵。由於電子傳播普及，學生也透過虛擬課程來學習視覺藝術。電視、網路及其他視覺科技，例如電影、攝影、錄影帶，彼此之間在文字、概念、互文性、圖像方面都有關聯，使這個學習環境更為擴展。

後現代藝術與藝術教育，很重要的一部分就是視覺文化各形式之間的這些關聯，不論是美術館、電視、電影、電玩、網路、產品包裝等等。正如 Ellen Dissanayake (1988) 所指出，各地文化運用「藝術」以使之獨具特色。當代民主社會提倡資訊之「自由」流通，這個「使之獨具特色」的觀念經大眾傳播、廣告所挪用，甚至也出現在教育中，例如透過藝術以提高其他學科的學習成效。過去千百年來藝術家為創造有力、教誨、引人注意的意象，所採用的種種技巧，今天仍然適用，只是規模空前。

從我的社會觀點來看，學生接觸視覺文化所遭遇的議題與問題，藝術教育界有責任因應解決。藝術教育的傳統一向偏重於對昔日視覺藝術傑作的賞析，但是社會面向的藝術教育，關切的則是以比較批判的立場，因應未來視覺藝術中愈來愈困難的挑戰。即使是未來的視覺藝術，仍然涉及過去，對於新的觀眾（例如我們的學生）仍然代表新的挑戰。

### 一個新民主的例子

若有人質疑視覺藝術中這些改變是否普遍，或是藝術教育人士必須起而因應的重要性，我可以舉出吉爾吉斯共和國的例子。吉爾吉斯本來是蘇聯的一員，該國的教育人士努力想為人民建立一套民主式的教育制度。舊蘇聯的課程一直抗拒改變，而負責審核所有課程的教育部，許多官員都來自舊政權。然而，經由吉爾吉斯部分教育人士鏗而不捨的努力，在相當短的時間內就開始出現改革。

其中一項改變就是不再承認列寧的英雄事蹟，改而提倡吉爾吉斯人歷史上的英雄 *Manas* 的故事。這首史詩超過五十萬行，口述傳誦了數世紀，最早的文字記錄可能是在13世紀。詩中敘述一位偉大領袖的功績，也正如列寧

的故事一樣，Manas 的故事在每一個年級都教授。

這個古老的故事，含有許多理想，都可以轉移至今天的民主環境。傳說中 Manas 是誠實、寬厚、智慧的典範。然而正如大部分重要的事情一樣，一個問題的解決之道，往往會引發新的問題。Manas 的教學中有一項工具，就是一部戲劇張力十足的影片（藝術作品），刻劃史詩中的人物、情節，還加上特效等背景。片中描寫史詩的內容，更栩栩如生的呈現了歷史上的性別歧視、種族歧視、暴力等等傳統。這種 Manas 的視覺呈現，也已經運用在校園之外。我看過一則電視廣告，內容是 Manas 推銷巧克力。然而，在這個新興的民主國家，正式的藝術教育幾乎還不存在，這些影像複雜的影響更未做任何探討因應。

藝術自由一向是民主的一個條件，甚至成爲民主的一個定義。但是現在，藝術自由獨特的「形式」正是「視覺」，而人人能夠接觸的視覺藝術，也就成爲創造民主文化的一大動力。在這個背景下，探討各種視覺藝術的社會意義，並非爲了宣傳，或其他任何形式、過去認爲獨特或異於藝術的意象。這樣的探討反而是21世紀的生活常態，也是藝術教育的主題。

## 結論

本文主張在教育中，藝術應呈現爲一項社會工具，放在社會背景中，從各個社會面向來探討。各種影像之間，有一個概念上、社會上的空間，而人與人正是在這個空間彼此接觸。學習活動也是發生在這個虛擬空間，在學生從社會背景探討繪畫與攝影作品的時候，看到電視節目中重現電影中的暴力，看到廣告中運用藝術，或在朋友聊天時談到搖滾樂影片而啓發電玩設計的靈感等等。

在這個稱爲資訊時代的新藝術文藝復興中，我們還有許多地方有待努力，而藝術教育界一項根本的責任，就在於教導學生視覺藝術的力量，以及這個力量所能帶來的自由與責任。如果我們夠敏銳，就不該再浪費時間爭論課程的結構，而應該更專注於課程的意義；不該過於強調全國與各州的課程標準，而應重視地方及全球社區；不該只談藝術的技術特質，而應更關切其存在的理由；尤其是，不該只是沿用我們自己過去的求學經驗來教導下一代，而必須著重於學生需要學些什麼。唯其如此，藝術教育才能帶領一般教育的潮流，而不是瞠乎其後，才能幫助衆人從視覺藝術中瞭解人生。

我要感謝本文中提及的許多學者專家強調藝術教育的社會面向，這些努力促使藝術教育繼續往社會的方向發展，使藝術教育更加豐富、有意義、更具批判性—因為我們瞭解，藝術的核心就是人，由人所創作、為人所創作、屬於人所有。

## 後記

本文原發表於1999年在美國華府召開的「全國藝術教育協會」年會，其中有幻燈片做為說明佐證，可惜在本文中無法呈現。

本文一部分完成於我在澳洲（新南威爾斯大學藝術學院）與西班牙（巴塞隆納大學藝術教育課程）的客座期間，我要特別感謝兩校及 Amanda Weate、Fernando Hernandez 兩位教授對我的支持與建議。此外也感謝 Patricia Stuhr 對我的初稿惠賜意見。

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