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Questioning the Past: Contexts, Functions, and Stakeholders in 19th-Century Art Education

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To this day the older teachers tell of the halcyon days when Walter Smith lectured on drawing and design, and the greatness of great men.

—Bailey, 1893, p. 6, Bailey Papers, Box 13

North American histories of 19th-century art education have most often been written for art educators by other art educators who have been, perhaps unduly, influenced by Isaac Edward’s Clarke’s political and economic interpretation (Soucy, 1990). Not only did Clarke valorize Walter Smith as the great man in American art education, but he focused on public school drawing instruction for children and technical training for industrial workers with Massachusetts, his home state, as the wellspring.¹ In Clarke’s version of the halcyon days, and in the stories of those imbued with his interpretation, the primary context for art education was northeastern industrial cities, the dominant function the preparation of human capital for economic success, and the chief stakeholders the capitalists of Massachusetts. These themes continued to color art education history through the end of the 20th century and are reflected in this essay, a review and synthesis of major secondary sources on the history of North American art education during the 19th century.

As in other forms of research, historians tend to find what they seek; that is, historical research is governed by our assumptions, working definitions, and preferred metaphors. For example, both Henry Turner Bailey (1865–1931) and Arthur Efland used a fluid metaphor to characterize underlying structures of art education. Writing at the end of the 19th century, Bailey quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson, describing the idea of art education falling like rain on the mountain tops of the best minds then running down, “‘from class to class, until it reaches the masses and works revolutions’” (p. 1). These rivers of thought had united, from Bailey’s perspective, to form a millrace, an energetic stream that powered New England manufacturing. For Efland (1990), streams of ideas also come together, but in harmonious confluence where the

¹The parallel in Canadian art education histories seems to be a tendency to privilege Ontario as the model, obscuring the diversity of Canadian experiences (Pearse, 1997).
effects of historical movements linger even after the movement has ceased. Bailey’s metaphor reflects the tendency, which continued into the 20th century, for history to be plotted top-down with a focus on the work of “great” minds, underlying beliefs in a predestined class structure and in progress through political revolutions which should, nonetheless, affirm the rightness of great men.

Efland’s streams, on the other hand, evoke the multiple voices and hopeful eclecticism emerging, along with recognition of the power that ideas of race and citizenship have had on schooling, in late 20th-century art education (Spring, 2001). As paradigms for art education have changed, histories of art teaching and learning have taken different forms. Some historical research in the last three decades has questioned received wisdom, probing more deeply into the social contexts where art education has occurred, examining the functions it has been asked to serve, and questioning the varied stakeholders who have advocated art education for themselves or others. Rather than simply describing how the streams of thought have fallen from mountaintops to masses, recent writers have begun to probe the landscape, the social structures and functions of visual art education, the greatness of great men.

WHAT SOCIAL FUNCTIONS DID ART EDUCATION SERVE CIRCA 1800–1912?

In colonial and 19th-century North America, art education served the needs of practical education, spiritual education, liberal education, moral education, and polite or ornamental education. Prior to colonization, indigenous peoples in North America had not conceived of an ideal art apart from society. Both practical and ritual objects were carefully shaped, prestige denoted and enhanced by decoration. The family was the first teacher, elders transmitting eye and hand skills along with beliefs and rituals. Even before British and French colonists began to leave their marks on the northeast, Catholic explorers and missionaries brought Spanish traditions and Baroque styles to the southwest. Emigrant artists taught native apprentices to paint and sculpt religious images that, in turn, could be used for spiritual instruction through art. Traditional hierarchies maintained the artisan status of the Spanish artist and prevented native artisans from gaining master status until colonial domination was reduced. The Academy of San Carlos, founded in 1781, brought neoclassical influences and European models of instruction to Mexico City, while use of indigenous materials changed styles and methods of working taught to apprentices in what is now New Mexico (Fane, 1996; Hail, 1987; Metropolitan, 1990; Smith, 1996).

In southwestern cities, as in the northeast, local artists offered lessons to those with time and inclination to learn and cash to pay. Functions and definitions of art derived from European notions of drawing as a genteel pastime and “the heroic ideals of high art” (Harris, 1982, p. 9). These functions were often combined, so that Benjamin Franklin, for example, recommended that youths in Pennsylvania academies receive a practical education that included everything useful and ornamental as a means for upward mobility. Thomas Jefferson’s unrealized plan for the University of Virginia included the fine arts with the liberal expectation that higher education would develop innate reason, improve individual virtue and social worth, thus contributing to the creation of a natural aristocracy. After seeing Parisian architecture and sculpture, John Adams wrote his wife Abigail that a young country most needed the useful, mechanic arts and should postpone study of the polite arts until his grandchildren’s generation. Polite education, as the term was used in the early Republic, was preparation for participation in genteel society, for displaying one’s good taste and artistic accomplishments at formal entertainments in the gracious homes of refined ladies and gentlemen (Bermingham, 2000; Bushman, 1992; Cremin, 1980; Efland, 1990; Spring, 2001; Strazdes, 1979; Winkelman, 1990; Wygant, 1983).
Theoretical and Rhetorical Foundations

Arguments for the value of art education varied depending on who was speaking and for whom art instruction was intended. Political leaders, like Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams, tended to focus on art’s value to the state and citizens. During most of the 19th century, only white male property owners enjoyed full citizenship in the United States. Thus, it is not surprising that much of the early rhetoric advocating art education addressed the interests of the dominant class of “enlightened gentlemen” (Miller, 1966, p. 16). This rhetoric was rooted in the world of the courtesy book, instructional literature originally written for Renaissance courtiers for whom drawing was both a refined amusement and a means to develop appreciation of art (Bushman, 1992; Strazdes, 1979).

European, British and Scottish influences contributed to the aesthetic theories of the early Republic. A North American gentleman most likely would have agreed with the empiricist philosopher John Locke that drawing was more useful than writing for communicating ideas, favored the neoclassical style of Sir Joshua Reynolds, believed in Lord Kames’ theory of aesthetic universals as standards of taste for the privileged few, and accepted the associationist psychology of the Scotsman Archibald Alison (1757–1839). Alison argued that taste was an emotion that connected sensations to memories, experience and environment, leading to the exercise of imagination. These associations led one to appreciate beauty or the sublime. Thus, exposure to great works of art was expected to improve intellect, behavior, and taste among the better classes, lifting the elite mind from materialism to higher pursuits (Efland, 1990; Miller, 1966; Storr, 1992; Winkelman, 1990).

Between about 1790 and 1840, arguments by college presidents and student orators, speakers at literary societies and mechanics’ institutes, dialogs among artists and patrons broadened these arguments to create a discourse of aesthetic didacticism, a generalized rhetoric that proposed a special connection between art and republican social order. This discourse ameliorated American distrust of the visual arts as sensuous pleasures. Grounded in Renaissance humanism, aesthetic didacticism began from the belief that art making was an intellectual project with techniques related to the highest forms of creativity. Works of art could embody and communicate ideals. Principles of criticism could be formulated and taught to people who would understand and judge works of architecture, painting and sculpture, but also be able to apply their improved critical faculties to social life. Rules governing the intellectual and technical aspects of art making could be taught to aspiring artists with natural talent. Education, as the primary means for individual improvement, should, therefore, include the arts as a benign influence on the general public in a democratic society (Harris, 1982; Storr, 1992).

By the 1840s, visual art had begun to enter the discourse of educational reform. Beautification of school buildings through painting, remodeling, and landscaping was recommended in the northeast as a way to cultivate taste and improve behavior. The sentimental novelist, Lydia Sigourney (1791–1865), recommended that classrooms aim for the elegance of a parlor. Few proper parlors, however, housed blackboards or encouraged children to draw on individual slates with powdery white chalk, schoolroom innovations that laid the practical foundation for drawing in common school education. Drawing served a range of school subjects: infant geographers were expected to develop clearer concepts of place and location by drawing maps; future surveyors learned spatial relations through studying perspective and proportion; geometry and beginning drawing were coterminous, as were penmanship and drawing. Object drawing based on ideas from Pestalozzi entered the curriculum during the same period as a means to help children observe objects accurately and acquire clearer ideas (Davis, 1992; Dobbs, 1972; Efland, 1990; Stankiewicz, 2000, 2001; Stevens, 1995; Winkelman, 1990).

As art education was democratized, it shifted from being chiefly a concern of elite male leaders to occupying the attentions of women and men who sought to ape their betters or
find work in growing art industries. At the same time that the emerging middle classes began to seek art education for themselves, the upper classes perceived art education as means to maintain their cultural authority. Genteel art education for refinement, manners and morals was advocated by upper-middle-class women and men for their own children and for the deserving poor, for example, single or widowed middle-class women who had fallen on hard times. Art and design schools specifically for women were established as philanthropic enterprises in Boston, New York, and notably Philadelphia (Chalmers, 1998a, 1998b; Korzenik, 1985; Waller, 1992; De Angeli Walls, 1993, 1994).

Art education came to be perceived as having special benefits for young women. Ornamental education for social display through subjects such as embroidery was most popular prior to 1815, though lists of types of fancywork and ornamental subjects could be found in catalogs of private schools well into the century. Some writers cautioned that such accomplishments failed to help a woman meet her responsibilities as wife and mother. Other authors, including some ministers and women who wrote didactic novels, advice books, and treatises on female education, positioned art as a positive moral influence. Art, they argued, naturally appealed to woman’s sensitive nature and the study of art would better prepare her for her destiny as wife, mother, and teacher (Cott, 1977; Douglas, 1977; Flynt, 1988; Harris, 1982; Parker, 1984; Ring, 1983; Stankiewicz, 1982; Winkelman, 1990).

WHAT FORMS OF ART EDUCATION WERE AVAILABLE IN NORTH AMERICA DURING THE EARLY-19TH-CENTURY ERA OF INDUSTRIALIZATION, URBANIZATION, AND MIDDLE-CLASS FORMATION?

Colonial North America lacked both an organized art world and systematic schooling, but as the beginnings of industrialization and urbanization challenged Jefferson’s vision of a rural Republic, art education could be found in formal and informal education, through apprenticeships, in art and design schools, and in nonpublic schools. Against the elitism of political theories of art, the humanist rhetoric of aesthetic didacticism, the practical introduction of drawing in service to technical literacy, and the amateurism of art in woman’s sphere, artists struggled to secure a professional identity. Inspired by the academic ideals of Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), painters and sculptors sought to move beyond the imitative labor of portraiture and conventions of craftsmanship, to establish a unified community with a national market, its own critics and journals, specialized studio spaces and educational institutions. Although ambitious North American artists throughout the 19th century regarded European study as a necessary finish to their art education, art academies were established in the late 18th century. With other Philadelphia artists, Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) founded the Columbianum in 1794. Its program of lectures and classes in drawing from casts and life was modeled on the British Academy, but the organization faltered within its first year. Art academies were founded in New York in 1802 and again in Philadelphia in 1805. As the artist’s status rose, belief in the noble soul of the artistic genius contributed to conceptions of the artist as teacher and minister. Families like the Peales, Sartains, and Weirs were recognized not only as gifted artists but also as educators and tastemakers (Bolger, 1976; Burns, 1996; Efland, 1990; Fahlman, 1997; Harris, 1982; Martinez & Talbott, 2000; Marzio, 1976).

Drawing Books

As American artists struggled to create their own professional communities with formal schools for artist training and galleries and museums to display their work, an emerging middle class
sought the kinds of art education formerly available only to upper-class amateurs. This art education was provided through new institutions such as venture schools, chartered academies and seminaries that provided secondary education for practical life, and publicly funded school systems. The introduction of drawing into Massachusetts' common schools will be the focus of a separate section below. The growth of printers and publishers created an important supporting context for art education, providing reproductions and drawing books.

From about 1820 to 1860, more than 145 drawing books were published in the United States. These books, written for the most part by working artists who shared a common vision of the meaning of art and the best methods for art making, were available to almost everyone. Prices ranged from as little as a quarter to more than twenty dollars for oversize tomes in multiple volumes. Engraved illustrations and expensive bindings increased costs; pocket-sized, lithographed booklets could fit almost any budget. Drawing cards also provided examples that could be copied, usually without instructions or rules (Marzio, 1976).

Drawing books and cards were intended as practical guides to drawing with the goals of teaching Americans how to perceive meaning in great art and beauty in nature. The goals of the books tended to be utilitarian rather than ornamental. Although some were intended specifically for women, the books appealed to both sexes as sources for disciplined knowledge of drawing, as means to educate the taste of workers and consumers and thus to encourage economic prosperity. These drawing manuals promulgated the belief that drawing was a universal language that anyone could learn. At the same time, they sought to develop a distinctly American art with examples of northeastern landscapes, combining a universal aesthetic with nationalism in subject matter and style (Andrus, 1977; Davis, 1992; Korzenik, 1985, 1999; Marzio, 1976).

One of the first drawing books was John Rubens Smith’s *Juvenile Drawing Book*, published in 1822. Smith (1775–1849), who would publish five different drawing manuals, immigrated to Boston from England about 1806. Just as writing masters used examples printed on copperplate for their classes as the basis for early penmanship books, so Smith used examples prepared for his classes as the basis for his books. As artist–teachers, Smith, Rembrandt Peale (1778–1860), John Gadsby Chapman (1808–1889), and other art crusaders brought authority to their arguments for the importance of drawing. Their books addressed multiple audiences: individuals seeking self-education, families, and schools. Artists like Winslow Homer (1836–1910) and Thomas Eakins (1849–1916), whose high school art classes followed a curriculum developed by Peale, initially developed drawing skills from copybooks. On-the-job instruction in lithographic workshops helped Homer and other artists refine these rough skills. Would-be artists, especially those in rural areas or who lacked later opportunities for advanced study or apprenticeship, used drawing books as primary means of learning, remaining on the threshold of professional competence (Barnhill, Korzenik, & Sloat, 1997; Davis, 1992, 1996; Johns, 1980; Korzenik, 1985, 1999; Thornton, 1996; Vlach, 1988).

**Collegiate Art Education**

Aesthetics and criticism entered the American college early in the 19th century through courses in moral philosophy taught to seniors by college presidents and through courses in classic language and culture. Bowdoin College established the first collegiate gallery in 1811, setting a precedent for colleges to collect and display works of fine art and curiosities. Yale purchased Colonel John Trumbull’s art collection in 1831, building a gallery the following year and constructing a building for a professional art school in 1864 to 1867. Syracuse University claimed the distinction of establishing the first degree-granting College of Fine Arts in 1873, just a year before Charles Eliot Norton (1827–1908) was appointed Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard. Women’s colleges introduced art history about the same time: Vassar in 1874 and
Wellesley in 1875. By the end of the 1870s, art history had become a popular fad in women’s colleges, as well as a component of professional and liberal education for men (Efland, 1990; Harris, 1976; Smyth & Lukehart, 1993; Stankiewicz, 2001).

Art Museums

Artists in 18th-century Boston and Philadelphia established the earliest North American picture galleries. Exhibiting copies of European paintings along with portraits they had painted, artists like John Smibert and Robert Edge Pine provided exemplars for aspiring artists and aesthetes. Charles Willson Peale’s museum, opened to the public in 1782, included natural history and fine arts with the intention of providing rational amusement to Philadelphians. After the Civil War, wealthy citizens of New York and Boston led other cities in establishing public museums to encourage study of the fine arts, provide examples for artisans and designers, and instruct the public. Philadelphia’s museum was a legacy of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in that city. Other American museums traced the impetus for their founding to London’s 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition and the establishment of the South Kensington Museum, today the Victoria and Albert. The collection of casts that furnished Edgerton Ryerson’s (1803–1882) educational museum for Upper Canada, now Ontario, in 1856 was based on this English precedent. Civic and cultural leaders who imported European reproductions and artworks for public display thus continued the colonization of North America, displacing approaches to art education transplanted earlier with a newer British model (Alexander, 1983, 1987; Harris, 1962; Tompkins, 1973; Zeller, 1989).

WHERE AND WHEN DID ART EDUCATION ENTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NORTH AMERICA?

Cities and towns in various regions of the northern United States were, by the 1850s, formally introducing the study of drawing into public schools. Throughout the years just prior to the eruption of the Civil War, many forms of drawing appeared within a growing number of public school classrooms. This swelling interest in drawing education helped to initiate the first statewide legislation of drawing as a subject of study within the public school curriculum. Updating statutes to take effect in the new decade, Massachusetts lawmakers ratified legislation in December 1859 declaring that drawing, along with algebra, vocal music, physiology, and hygiene, should be taught in public schools. With passage of this legislative act the subject of drawing was listed specifically among permitted academic subjects that might be taught in any public school (Belshe, 1946; Bennett, 1926; Clarke, 1885; Green, 1948; McVitty, 1934; Stankiewicz, 2001; Wygant, 1983, 1993).

Massachusetts’ Petition for Drawing Instruction

Nearly a decade later, in June 1869, a select group of 12 individuals and 2 businesses delivered a formal petition to Massachusetts lawmakers requesting, in part, that this legislative body appeal to the Board of Education to report some definite plan for introducing free instruction in drawing in all towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants. The 14 signers of this petition had firm ties to business and textile manufacturing in Boston and the surrounding region, but they had other ties as well. Some were linked through strong vocal and written advocacy for substantial governmental tariffs placed on manufactured goods imported from Europe. A number regarded commercial trade protection and teaching Americans skills in mechanical and industrial drawing as kindred avenues for advancing the economic climate in America,
particularly in the northeast, a region that depended heavily on industrial manufacturing. Many of the drawing education petitioners had graduated from Harvard College during the early 19th century, and throughout their lives maintained close ties with this educational institution. In the 1860s, eight of the 12 individuals who signed the drawing petition acted as members of overseer committees for Harvard, helping to set policy and direction for this prominent establishment. These petitioners were also connected by religious affiliation; many were vocal and active Unitarians within and around Boston. Reverend Edward E. Hale (1822–1909), a spokesman for the petitioning group, was one of Boston’s most prominent Unitarian ministers. Overlapping business, political, educational, and religious beliefs and activities appear to have motivated these petitioners to spearhead the industrial drawing movement in Massachusetts (Bolin, 1985, 1986; Efland, 1983, 1985b, 1990; Saunders, 1976).

Massachusetts lawmakers quickly heeded the petitioners’ request for an investigation into the promotion of publicly supported drawing education within the state. In June 1869, legislators endorsed a Resolve that the State Board of Education explore the feasibility of legislating instruction in mechanical drawing within public schools of larger cities. At the conclusion of the legislative session, the Board of Education undertook efforts to carry out the lawmakers’ request. A Special Committee on Drawing, consisting of three members of the Massachusetts Board of Education and Board Secretary Joseph White, worked throughout the fall and winter of 1869 and into the spring of 1870 gathering information and insight on drawing education offered from interested citizens throughout the state of Massachusetts. The Special Committee on Drawing received a wide range of responses from concerned individuals about the purposes and practices of drawing in public schools and the suitability of enacting drawing education legislation. In the spring of 1870, the Massachusetts Board of Education unanimously forwarded to the legislature a formal recommendation to require the teaching of elementary and free hand drawing in all public schools of the commonwealth (Bolin, 1986, 1990).

Institutionalizing Drawing Instruction

With passage of the Act Relating to Free Instruction in Drawing, signed into law on May 16, 1870, Massachusetts became the first state to mandate drawing education as part of the public school curriculum. The next step was to find a director for drawing as recommended by the educational and drawing experts consulted earlier. The Committee investigated individuals within the United States who could possibly administer the drawing program for Boston, but made a decision to hire an art master from across the Atlantic. Charles Callahan Perkins (1823–1886), a wealthy Bostonian knowledgeable in the arts, who had traveled extensively in Europe, was asked to recommend a person to fill this position. Perkins suggested the School Committee contact Sir Henry Cole, director of the South Kensington School in London, and ask him to nominate graduates of his National Art Training School. Cole recommended Walter Smith (1836–1886) who was then directing the Art School at Leeds (Billings, 1987; Bolin, 1990, 1995; Chalmers, 2000a; Efland & Soucy, 1991; Korzenik, 1985; Stankiewicz, 2001).

In October 1871, Walter Smith arrived in Boston, with his family, and commenced his professional work in Massachusetts as both the State Director of Art Education and the Director of Drawing for the Public Schools of Boston. In his dual positions, Smith showed himself to be an individual of tremendous dedication and energy, who throughout his tenure spoke and wrote zealously on behalf of drawing education. Smith was both explicit and adamant regarding the type of drawing that should be taught, and for what purpose this subject ought to make its way into public school classrooms. Industrial drawing was distinguished from ornamental and professional branches by its importance as a factor in trades and manufactures. Furthermore, Smith believed that all children of normal intelligence could learn to draw and that, in the lower grades, drawing should be taught by regular instructors, not specialists. One of Smith’s
challenges was providing clear and precise lessons that teachers without art training could present successfully (Belshe, 1946; Chalmers, 2000a; Clarke, 1885; Dean, 1923/24; Efland, 1990; Eisner, 1972; Green, 1948, 1966; Haney, 1908; Marzio, 1976; Sheath, 1982; Wygant, 1983).

Massachusetts Normal Art School

Smith worked unwaveringly throughout his tenure in Massachusetts to achieve his goals, soon realizing that a teacher education facility with a focus on drawing instruction needed to be established. Serious discussions with the legislature regarding the founding of a school for the preparation of art teachers were initiated in the spring of 1872. The Massachusetts Normal Art School (MNAS) began operations on November 6, 1873, in Boston, with Smith taking the reins as school principal in addition to his responsibilities as state agent and city supervisor for industrial drawing. During Smith’s nine years as director of the MNAS, hundreds of students passed through its doors. Many graduates and certificate holders supervised drawing in neighboring states, disseminating Smith’s methods throughout the northeast and into eastern Canada. In addition, Smith traveled throughout the northeastern United States and eastern Canadian Provinces talking to multitudes of educators, citizen groups, and lawmakers about his purposes and practices of drawing education, inscribing his mark on many of these locations (Chalmers, 1985a, 1985b, 1990, 2000a; Efland, 1990; Stirling, 1997; Wood & Soucy, 1990).

Walter Smith’s Departure

Throughout Walter Smith’s time in Massachusetts, there was open tension and confrontation between Smith and various others. These disputes reached a climax in the early 1880s. In a vote taken by the Boston School Committee on April 26, 1881, Henry Hitchings (d. 1902), art teacher at the English High School in Boston, was elected to replace Walter Smith as Director of Drawing for the Boston Public Schools. Little more than a year later, in early July 1882, the Board of Education voted to dismiss Walter Smith from his dual positions as State Director of Art Education and Principal of the Massachusetts Normal Art School. Much speculation has occurred regarding reasons for Walter Smith’s dismissal from his three professional positions in Massachusetts, but the precise motivations for his removal are not known. Were the key factors Smith’s bitter and open controversies with competing authors and publishers of drawing textbooks, Smith’s “old fashioned” and demanding teaching methods, personality conflicts that took place between Smith and those around him, nationality and denominational conflicts, or a squabble that occurred over the cost of the building rented to house the Massachusetts Normal Art School? No conclusive explanations have been given (Chalmers, 2000a; Dean, 1923/24; Efland, 1990; Green, 1948, 1966; Korzenik, 1985; Smith, 1992).

Industrial Drawing Textbooks and Controversies

The production and dissemination of printed materials to teach drawing expanded tremendously in the second half of the 19th century. Fueled by technological printing developments, including the invention of chromolithography, and by a burgeoning education market within and outside of school, authors and publishers of drawing textbooks, drawing cards and other instructional drawing materials vied for sales. By the outbreak of the Civil War, 35 book companies had published drawing manuals, and were attempting to sell their books to public schools throughout the eastern United States (Marzio, 1976, 1979; Stankiewicz, 1985).

Woolworth, Ainsworth, and Company began publishing William Bartholomew’s drawing books in 1868, although Bartholomew had been producing drawing books and cards for
publication since the 1850s. Bartholomew (1822–1898) was born in Boston, but spent time as a cabinetmaker at Post Mills, Vermont. He returned to Boston to study art, and soon began a nearly 20-year career as a teacher of drawing in Boston’s English High School and the Girls High and Normal School, beginning his efforts there in the early 1850s. Bartholomew, now a painter whose major interest was in representational drawing, adapted his books to the industrial drawing movement, helping them maintain an influence beyond New England. Battles between Woolworth, Ainsworth, and Company and J. R. Osgood, who had begun publishing Walter Smith’s drawing books, testify to the importance of the potential market for school drawing books. For a number of months accusations flew between the two parties. However, as Smith gained a firmer foothold in Massachusetts by way of his professional positions, disputes between his publisher and the publisher of Bartholomew’s drawing books diminished. For a short period Smith’s confrontations over textbooks subsided, but then turned volatile in another direction (Bennett, 1926; Efland, 1985a; Korzenik, 1985; Wygant, 1983).

Walter Smith’s editor, John S. Clark, severed ties with J. R. Osgood and Company in 1874, to join the publishing firm of L. Prang and Company. The Prang Company purchased the publication rights to Smith’s popular American Textbooks for Art Education, which were published in a range of formats by Prang and Company beginning in 1875. In the next half-decade, the publication partnership of Louis Prang and Walter Smith solidified their hold on the very profitable art education market. Korzenik (1985) has described it in these terms: “Fortunes were to be made on the orders coming in from all the states for Walter Smith’s books, drawing cards, and drawing models, and up to 1882, Smith had a virtual monopoly, shared only by his publisher” (p. 240) (Korzenik, 1985; Marzio, 1976; Wygant, 1983).

With great sums of money to be secured and power to be grasped, Prang and Smith’s relationship was at loggerheads, even as early as 1876. The disputes between author and publisher grew more vehement and vocal through the late 1870s, as each attempted to establish a more secure financial foundation, at the other’s expense. In the days just prior to Smith’s dismissal from his position as Director of Drawing for the Public Schools of Boston in the spring of 1881, confrontations between Smith and Prang were featured in Boston newspapers, supporting interpretations that Prang may have helped force Smith out of Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Drawing Act of 1870 helped to cultivate an environment wherein drawing education was viewed as a lucrative commodity. The open competition demonstrated between differing ideologies and practices of drawing instruction is evidence of the great value authors and publishing companies placed on this educational market that was expanding throughout the United States and Canada (Chalmers, 2000a; Korzenik, 1985; Stankiewicz, 1986; Wygant, 1983).

**Drawing Education in Other States**

Passage of “An Act Relating to Free Instruction in Drawing” provided the motivation and model for other state legislatures. The states of Maine, in February 1871, and New York, in May 1875, established laws requiring that drawing be instituted as a curricular subject in the public schools of these states. In the year following passage of drawing education legislation in New York, lawmakers in Vermont enacted legislation establishing free-hand drawing as a required subject of study in public schools. Drawing instruction continued to gain attention in the public schools of other New England and eastern states throughout the final quarter of the 19th century, even though many states did not enact legislation either permitting or requiring drawing as a subject of study for students in their public schools. Between 1870 and 1907, however, lawmakers in 12 states established drawing as a required subject of study in public school. Through this same period, drawing was approved as a public school subject by cities or towns in 31 other states (Commissioner of Education, 1882; Clarke, 1885; Cubberley, 1934; Saunders, 1976).
WHY WAS ART EDUCATION IMPORTANT IN THE INDUSTRIALIZED, URBAN SOCIETY OF LATE 19TH CENTURY NORTH AMERICA?

As the 19th century drew to a close, there were significant changes in North American communities. Patterns of social life were altered by rapid industrialization, the growth of cities, the arrival of new immigrants, and increasing numbers of women who joined new immigrants and others in the industrial workforce. The forms of art education that emerged at the end of the century reflected and, to some degree, shaped the changes that occurred in social life. Manual training, arts and crafts, design and composition, picture study, the kindergarten movement, and early experiments in progressive education were both protests and accommodations to the conditions of industrialized, urban society.

Manual Training

Like industrial drawing, manual training was introduced into schools in response to calls for more “practical” forms of education. From the perspective of businessmen who supported it, manual training was a form of vocational education that would prepare students for work in mills and factories. From the perspective of educators, however, manual training was conceived as a form of general education. In the 1880s, educators who supported manual training argued that it was not “trade training,” or preparation for particular forms of work. They argued that students would develop hand and eye coordination by learning to use tools for working with wood and metal. The skills gained through manual training would be beneficial for all students, whatever their vocational destination in life (Cremin, 1961; Fisher, 1967; Kliebard, 1999; Stamp, 1970).

In principle, manual training was beneficial for all students, but in practice it was most often provided for the children of First People nations, African American children, the children of new immigrants, and working-class children. Some children were deemed more in need of manual training than others to develop character and prepare them for work. Typically, both moral and economic reasons were given for establishing manual training programs in public and private schools; however, in the boarding schools that were established for African American and Native students, an expectation that the institutions should be self-supporting sometimes took precedence over students’ education. In such cases, manual training consisted of little more than the manual labor needed to sustain the institutions. In boarding schools organized on the “half-and-half” plan, students attended classes in the mornings and spent afternoons performing the same manual chores, again and again, in the schools’ shops, fields, and laundries. Boarding schools stripped away students’ Native cultures, including their art forms. Native art forms were not included in the curricula of boarding schools until after the turn of the 20th century (Adams, 1995; Anderson, 1988; Chalmers, 2000b; Coleman, 1993; Kliebard, 1999; Lazerson, 1971; Miller, 1996; Spring, 2001; Titley, 1986).

In practice, manual training was also shaped by assumptions about gender roles, along with assumptions about race and class. As many public schools began to offer classes in woodworking and metal work for boys, girls began to receive instruction in cooking and sewing. Over time, as educators began to see vocational training as a central goal of schooling, many public schools established programs for girls in home economics, called “domestic science” or “household arts.” Such programs were based on an assumption that all girls, whatever else they might do temporarily, were destined by nature to be homemakers. The establishment of home economics programs at the turn of the 20th century was especially significant in the context of urban industrial society, because increasing numbers of women were leaving home to enter the industrial workforce. As a form of vocational preparation, home economics programs had more to do with preserving nostalgic ideals of home and family than with preparing women
for the contemporary world of work (Kessler-Harris, 1982; Powers, 1992; Rury, 1991; Tyack & Hansot, 1990).

When manual training was first introduced into North American schools in the 1880s, most educators were resistant to the idea of vocational education. By the turn of the century, however, many of them came to see not only manual training but also all of public schooling as preparation for work. At the same time that views about the purpose of education were changing, the nature of work in industrial society was changing as well. With the development of new technology and assembly line methods of production, workers no longer needed the kinds of knowledge and skills that might be developed through manual training programs. Instead of hand and eye coordination and qualities such as self-direction, the kinds of “skills” industrial workers needed were an ability to follow orders and to perform simple, repetitive tasks. Increasingly, educators joined businessmen in criticizing manual training at the turn of the century, not because it was vocational preparation, but because it was an anachronistic, outmoded form of vocational training in an industrial age (Cremin, 1961; Kliebard, 1999; Lazerson, 1971).

**Arts and Crafts**

As manual training seemed increasingly outmoded to educators who supported vocational training, educators who still supported general education and manual training began to join forces with arts and crafts enthusiasts. In the United States, a successful precedent for joining manual training with art instruction had already been established by Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903). In 1881, Leland had opened the experimental Industrial Art School in Philadelphia to give grammar school students experience with what he called the “minor arts.” The school’s curriculum included classes in design, modeling, painting, pottery, embroidery, repoussé, woodcarving, and carpentry. Leland viewed instruction in crafts as a form of general vocational preparation. Rather than giving students specific skills that would prepare them for a particular trade, he held that crafts education taught students how to work.\(^2\) Leland’s assistant J. Liberty Tadd (1854–1917) took over as director of the school in 1884, and the school continued to be acclaimed a success under Tadd’s guidance. The school served as a model for similar programs in other North American communities, as well as being recognized abroad (Anderson, 1997; Baker, 1984; Stankiewicz, 2001).

Before establishing the Industrial Art School in Philadelphia, Leland had lived for 10 years in Britain where he became acquainted with the ideas of John Ruskin (1819–1900) and William Morris (1834–1896), two of the leading figures in the British Arts and Crafts movement. A romantic idealist, Ruskin held that a society’s moral character was reflected in the quality of its art, both fine and applied. Morris adapted Ruskin’s moral aesthetic to a craft ideal, holding there should be joy and dignity in labor, rather than the fractured, demeaning character of toil in modern capitalist society.\(^3\) Along with a philosophical basis for the British Arts and Crafts movement, Morris provided examples of the craft ideal in practice with his firm Morris and Co., organized in 1875, and the Kelmscott Press, founded in 1890 (Boris, 1986; Kaplan, 1987).

\(^2\) Leland published *The Minor Arts* in 1880. His book served as an early reference work on many “lost” crafts for arts and crafts enthusiasts in Britain and the United States.

\(^3\) Ruskin was a prolific writer, publishing dozens of books and pamphlets over the course of his lifetime. His works were compiled and indexed by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn in *The Works of John Ruskin*, published in 39 volumes from 1903 to 1912. Among Ruskin’s most influential works were “The Nature of Gothic,” the sixth chapter of the second volume of *The Stones of Venice*, published in 1853; the five volumes of *Modern Painters*, published from 1843 to 1860; and *The Elements of Drawing*, published in 1857. Morris’s works were compiled by his daughter May Morris in *The Collected Works of William Morris*, published in 24 volumes from 1910 to 1915.
The Arts and Crafts movement in the United States flourished between 1890 and 1910. Arts and crafts ideals were spread through arts and crafts societies, periodicals, and classes. Instruction was offered in a variety of settings, including summer schools, design schools, and settlement houses, as well as public schools. Working people were part of the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain, but in the United States, the movement was predominately a middle- and upper-class phenomenon. This blunted the movement’s social criticism and altered many of its central ideals. In the United States, advocates of arts and crafts included social reformers, tastemakers who focused on the appearance of objects, and those who saw arts and crafts as a hobby or leisure activity. Guiding ideals in the American Arts and Crafts movement included work, taste, and therapy (Amburgy, 1997; Boris, 1986; Lears, 1981).

Jane Addams (1860–1935) and Ellen Gates Starr (1860–1940) were among the social reformers concerned with work in American society. Addams and Starr were cofounders of Hull House, a widely acclaimed social settlement in Chicago. Whereas Starr believed it was important to change the nature of industrial work in order to restore what Morris called “joy in labor,” Addams focused on changing workers’ perceptions.4 In the Labor Museum at Hull House, workers could see demonstrations of traditional skills and displays of handcrafted objects, and come away with a new understanding of the history of labor that imparted significance to their own positions in the modern workforce. In seeking to change the way workers viewed their work rather than the work itself, Addams’ position was one of accommodation to modern conditions of labor (Amburgy, 1990; Lears, 1981; Stankiewicz, 1989).

Many of the arts and crafts societies focused on taste. The Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, founded in 1897, was an example. Although there were conflicts between social reformers and tastemakers in the early years of the organization, the conflicts were resolved when a change in leadership established a firm commitment to exhibition and sales. Other arts and crafts societies similarly focused on educating consumers’ taste by mounting exhibitions of handcrafted items and maintaining salesrooms that offered handcrafted items for sale (Boris, 1986; Cooke, 1997; Kaplan, 1987).

One of the most compelling ideas within the Arts and Crafts movement was a belief that crafts were primitive, natural activities. As middle-class Americans achieved more wealth and leisure at the end of the 19th century, they increasingly began to fear they were becoming overcivilized, out of touch with “real life.” Plagued by doubts about the reality of modern life, many came to see arts and crafts as a source of primal, authentic experience. In this context, handwork came to be viewed as a means of therapeutic rejuvenation (Lears, 1981).

In other contexts, crafts were associated with primitive cultural experience and children’s development. According to the “culture epoch theory” then popular, children’s development replicated the stages of development through which the whole human race had passed. According to the theory, early stages of children’s development corresponded to early stages of racial development. Since decorative arts and traditional crafts were associated with supposedly primitive stages of human history (which included both past cultures and contemporary cultures, such as those of Native Americans), children were believed to have a natural affinity for arts and crafts. Charles Godfrey Leland and Arthur Wesley Dow were among those who applied the culture epoch theory to teaching art (Boris, 1986; Kaplan, 1987; Moffatt, 1977; Stankiewicz, 2001).

Design and Composition

Arthur Wesley Dow (1857–1922) was a key figure in the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the century. Through his work as an artist, a theorist, and a teacher of teachers, Dow made important contributions to art education that would shape the field for decades to come. The contributions of Denman Waldo Ross (1853–1935) were equally important, although not as often recognized in histories of art education. Ross and Dow were similar in emphasizing formal aspects of art over narrative content, but they differed in the elements and principles of design they stressed in their theories and their approaches to teaching. Ross’s theory of design was based on three central principles: balance, rhythm, and harmony. The important elements in his theory were tones (value and color), measures (size or area), and shapes. For Dow, the central elements of art were line, color, and notan (light and dark). These elements were arranged according to five principles of composition: opposition, transition, subordination, repetition, and symmetry. A general overarching principle was proportion, or good spacing.5 Whereas Ross emphasized studying the past and a thorough preparation of students before they created original compositions, Dow emphasized originality in students’ work, even the work of beginners (Green, 1999; Moffatt, 1977; Stankiewicz, 1988, 1990, 2001).

Dow’s own development as an artist had been deeply influenced by the ukiyo-e woodcuts of Katsushika Hokusai. In his books and teaching, Dow included examples of art from both eastern and western cultures. He was not alone in his admiration for the art of nonwestern cultures. By the 1890s, many artists, along with much of the general public, had become familiar with decorative arts from around the world as a result of the Aesthetic movement.

The Aesthetic Movement

The Aesthetic movement flourished in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s. Like the Arts and Crafts movement, the Aesthetic movement had originated in Britain as a reaction to social changes that came with industrialization; however, instead of challenging the structure of capitalist work relationships, the Aesthetic movement offered a way of believing in the power of art without the kind of social critiques mounted by Ruskin, Morris, and others. The Aesthetic movement placed artistic values above ethical ones. Its central ideal was art for art’s sake, a celebration of universal form and style apart from the historical, social, and moral contexts in which works of art were created or used. Although the Aesthetic movement was centered in the decorative arts, it was also apparent in arts such as painting and architecture. The Aesthetic movement reflected and helped reshape Americans’ ideas about nature, religion, political economy, and gender in ways that were in keeping with an urban, industrial way of life (Stein, 1986).

In art education, Aesthetic beliefs had initially been disseminated by the South Kensington system of teaching drawing and design, brought to North America by Walter Smith. Over time, elements of both Aestheticism and the Arts and Crafts movement were combined in textbooks published by the Prang Educational Company in the late 19th and early 20th century (Stankiewicz, 1992a).

Schoolroom Decoration and Picture Study. In the 1880s and 1890s, Ruskin’s belief that people’s social environment shaped their taste and character became a rationale for placing reproductions of art in schoolrooms. In 1883, the Art for Schools Association was founded

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5Ross’s major work on design was his book *Theory of Pure Design*, published in 1907. Dow’s major work was *Composition*, first published in 1899. *Composition* was one of the most influential books of all time in the field of art education. It went through twenty editions, with the last one appearing in 1941.
in Britain with Ruskin as president of the association. In the United States, the Boston Public School Art League was established in 1892. Similar organizations were soon founded in other American cities. One of the most influential was the Chicago Public School Art Society, established in 1894 with Ellen Gates Starr as its first president. In addition to developing students’ character, goals of schoolroom decoration included Americanization of new immigrants, providing a more home-like atmosphere in schools, and subduing “rough boys” (Boris, 1986; Dobbs, 1972; Efland, 1990; Finley, 1992; Stankiewicz, 1992a, 2001).

The movement to decorate schools, which became a popular cause in the United States in the 1890s, soon expanded to include a systematic study of pictures as part of the art education program in schools. The picture study movement, which lasted from the mid-1890s until the 1920s, focused on appreciation of masterpieces to develop students’ character and taste. Moral lessons were based on the subject matter or stories represented in images, and students were given information about the lives of the artists. In upper grades, students might also analyze formal qualities. The images used for picture study were typically black and white or sepia reproductions, created through the halftone process that had recently been perfected. Reproductions were available from the Prang Educational Company, Perry Prints, and other suppliers. Books and articles on picture study also supported the picture study movement (Stankiewicz, 1984).

Professionalization in Art Education

Textbooks, journals, and professional organizations played important roles in strengthening art education as a profession at the end of the 19th century. In the 1870s, when drawing was first introduced into many schools, most teachers were not trained to teach art; in fact, teacher preparation of any sort was still minimal, especially for teachers in the primary and grammar grades. For this reason, most teachers relied on textbooks to teach various subjects in school (Cuban, 1993).

As drawing became an established part of school curricula, textbooks for school-based instruction became available to teachers. Textbooks for schools offered progressive instruction over 12 grades, a feature that distinguished school series from the drawing books that had been popular earlier in the century. Walter Smith’s books were one of the first series of textbooks developed specifically for schools. By the end of the century, however, Smith’s books were eclipsed by other series published by Prang that combined a pedagogy based on students’ interests with comprehensive content in constructive, representational, and decorative art. As teachers and art supervisors departed from textbook-driven methods of teaching and began to create their own art curricula, there were conflicts with textbook publishers such as Prang (Marzio, 1976; Stankiewicz, 1986, 2001).

Periodicals also played an important role in supporting new movements and keeping teachers and art supervisors informed about developments in art education. The Perry Magazine, published from 1898 to 1906, helped promote schoolroom decoration and picture study. J. C. Witter’s journal Art Education, published from 1894 to 1901, covered a range of professional topics. The School Arts Book, first published in 1901 as the Applied Arts Book, is still being published today. Then as now, it was an important source of professional information for art educators. Henry Turner Bailey (1865–1931), one of the founders of the journal, served as editor of School Arts from 1903 to 1917. Bailey influenced the course of art education at the turn of the century and beyond through his work as editor, as well as his many books and articles on art education (Efland, 1990; MacDonald, 1997; Stankiewicz, 2001).

Professional organizations were another means by which leaders in art education helped shape the direction of the field in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1883 the National Educational Association established its Department of Art Education. Members of the department
presented many reports on the status of American art education, including the influential report of the Committee of Ten on Elementary Art Education, completed in 1902. In 1893 two other important organizations were established: the Manual Training Teachers Association of America and the Western Drawing Teachers Association. After several evolutions in name and membership, the Manual Training Teachers Association joined forces with art teachers in eastern states and eventually became the Eastern Arts Association. Similarly, the Western Drawing Teachers Association combined with manual training teachers in the Midwest and evolved into the Western Arts Association (Efland, 1990; Jacobs & Francis, 1985; Wygant, 1997).

The Kindergarten Movement and Progressive Education

The kindergarten movement originated in the work of the German philosopher and educator Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852). Seeking to reform current educational practices that were based on memorization, punishment, and discipline, Froebel designed a curriculum based on play. Educational activities in his kindergarten were structured around a series of progressive “gifts and occupations” that taught young children concepts of universal form and number (Brosterman, 1997; Efland, 1990).

Elizabeth Peabody (1804–1894) opened the first English-speaking kindergarten in the United States in 1860. The first training school for kindergarten teachers was established in St. Louis in 1873. One of the most influential centers for promoting the kindergarten and Froebelian principles was the Chicago Kindergarten Club, established in 1884 by Alice Harvey Putnam (1841–1919), one of Peabody’s students, and Putnam’s student Elizabeth Harrison (1849–1927). For the most part, economically privileged women were leaders of the kindergarten movement. They established privately supported kindergartens that, over time, came to be absorbed into public school systems in many cities. The role of privileged women in promoting kindergartens was similar to the role played by privileged men who established privately funded centers for manual training that eventually became part of the public school system in cities such as Chicago. Some advocates of kindergarten education claimed that young children’s working with Froebelian gifts and occupations was a foundation for the kind of practical education offered by manual training in the grammar grades (Efland, 1990; Finnegan, 1997; Lazerson, 1971; Saunders, 1990; Snyder, 1972).

An emphasis on active learning and practical education was also apparent in the early stages of the progressive movement in education. Francis Wayland Parker (1837–1902) and John Dewey (1859–1952) were two of the prominent figures in progressive education in Chicago at the end of the 19th century. Instruction in art was an important part of the curriculum in the practice school affiliated with Parker’s Cook County Normal School, as it was in Dewey’s Laboratory School.6 By psychologizing the value of art in students’ lives, Parker and Dewey were forerunners of modernist conceptions of art education (Amburgy, 1990; Korzenik, 1992; Sidelnick, 1995).

Women’s Contributions to Art Education. Women were not only the leaders of the kindergarten movement. Through their work in other kinds of voluntary organizations, including settlement houses, arts and crafts societies, and women’s clubs, they made significant contributions to many aspects of art and education in the late 19th and early 20th century.

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6Parker’s views on education were published in his Talks on Pedagogics in 1894. Dewey’s major works on education at the turn of the century include The School and Society, published in 1899, and The Child and the Curriculum, published in 1902. Schools of Tomorrow, written with his daughter Evelyn Dewey, was published in 1915. Dewey’s major philosophical treatise on education, Democracy and Education, was published in 1916.
Although much of the written history of 19th-century art education has focused on the ideas and accomplishments of men, feminine accomplishments in the form of ornamental education helped lay a foundation for art in public schools. Beliefs that women are naturally suited to teach the young led to the reality that most K-12 art teachers have been women, contributing to a lower status for art in society. The role of women in art education remains a site for critical historical research (Blair, 1994; Boris, 1986; Finley, 1992; Stankiewicz, 1989, 2001; Stein, 1986).

**HOW DID ART EDUCATION IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY DIFFER FROM ART EDUCATION A CENTURY EARLIER?**

By the beginning of the 20th century, art educators had developed a professional self-consciousness that set them apart from classroom teachers and from artists. The early histories of art education written by Clarke (1885) and Bailey (1893, 1900) located art education in formal, often publicly funded, institutions for education, ignoring the varied mixture of informal and formal delivery systems found at the beginning of the century. Art education was located in the political context of northeastern industrial expansion and the cultural context of European academic art traditions. Art educators themselves, civic leaders and capitalists, philanthropists and politicians, were drawn as the chief stakeholders, though women were active in the background actually delivering art instruction. Walter Smith was the great man centering the composition, while systematic art education for schoolchildren, industrial workers, and teachers radiated outward from his position as expert. Stacks of sequential drawing books in the corners of the canvas bore the imprint of publishers rather than artist–authors and were designated for schools rather than individuals, families, and schools.

By the end of the 19th century, art education had become both a reflection of cultural hierarchy and a means of reproducing that hierarchy (Levine, 1988). The rhetoric focused on social control of the masses through art, with little more than lip service to Franklin’s belief in upward mobility through art education. The aesthetic didacticism that had argued for beneficial connections between art and life was being displaced by aesthetic distance, formal design, and the isolation of art from life. The rich, if sometimes overwhelming, range of motives found at the beginning of the century was replaced by advocacy for art as a tasteful retreat from pressures of modern life (Stankiewicz, 1997). On the other hand, art educators were committed to bridging the gap between art and life. Growing recognition that children’s drawings served different functions than adult art-making resonated with earlier beliefs that art contributed to intellectual as well as emotional growth. In kindergartens, museums, and settlement houses, as well as in many schools, young people were introduced to visual art as one element for improving life.

**WHAT ARE SOME CRUCIAL QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR FUTURE HISTORICAL RESEARCH?**

In spite of the number of publications relevant to the history of 19th century art education produced during the past 3 decades, more research can be done. A number of the strongest dissertations in this area have not been followed by more accessible articles or books. Many of the most provocative sources have been researched and written by non-art educators. More than other research methods, historical research benefits from interdisciplinarity. The references for this chapter include sources from art history; history of education; social, cultural, and economic history; gender and ethnic studies, as well as American studies. These secondary
sources can fund more comprehensive interpretations of primary source material or be mined for suggestive topics. What kinds of art education existed in venture schools, seminaries, and academies early in the 19th century? Who sought this kind of art instruction and why? How did systematic art education develop in cities other than Boston? What were the relationships among art museums, schools of art and design, and public school art programs? How have publishers of textbooks and reproductions supported or constrained art teaching? What forms of art education were available to First People nations, African Americans, and immigrants? What roles have institutions for adult education, such as Chautauquas and correspondence schools, played in general art education? What impacts did world’s fairs and similar cultural expositions have on dissemination of ideas in art education? How was 19th century art education affected by technological and cultural changes that contributed to the emergence of popular and visual culture?

More detailed, personalized studies based on archival research are needed to address these and other questions. At the same time, art education history is entering a state where larger syntheses and cross-cultural comparisons can begin to be done. We are just beginning to move beyond the halcyon days of Walter Smith and into the scarcely charted waters, both calm and crashing, which will help us better understand how art educators and art education have come to be as they are.

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2. QUESTIONING THE PAST


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