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Emerging Visions of Art Education

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

This section of the *Handbook* explores the role that educational visions play in charting the future of art education. “What are educational visions, and “why do they arise periodically throughout history? Why do specific visions achieve dominance within educational theory, and what is their role in shaping practice in art education? What kind of research and policy issues are brought into play when new visions seize the professional imagination? Is the conceptual articulation of a vision a form of research, a declaration of educational policy; or are they forms of advocacy?

In *A History of Art Education* (Efland, 1990), I identified a series of trends or streams of influence coursing through the past 2 centuries, each having their origins in opposing conceptions of the individual, the nature of knowledge, the role of the visual arts in social and cultural life, and in rival educational purposes. The visions that dominated the last 100 or so years were responses to the challenges of modernity, which ushered in unprecedented changes in the forms of work, in economic and social organization, and especially in new forms of art. Each critiqued the practices in art education of its day, offered remedies, and promoted reform. They weathered periods of conflict before gaining acceptance and changing established practices.

Each chapter in this section offers a series of potential visions for the future of art education. Each expressly or by implication offers its critique of current practice. Definitions of “current practice” vary from writer to writer. For some, current practice might be an art education grounded in traditional studio practice, whereas for others it may be discipline–based art education (DBAE) prominent in the 1980s. Others see their position as a refinement or elaboration of the discipline–based position, whereas others abandon it in pursuit of differing directions. To understand the nature of educational visions, I compare it with the term *paradigm*. 
Visions, Paradigms, and Models

The Paradigm

Change in the history of science has been likened to a sequence of revolutions called “paradigm shifts” by the noted historian of science, Thomas Kuhn. (Kuhn, 1970; p. viii see also Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996). Heretofore, progress in science was pictured as an uphill march toward enlightenment. Each advance in knowledge eliminated the falsehoods that obscured human understanding. Kuhn challenged this representation of science history by characterizing the path to enlightenment as a sequence of conceptual conflicts or “revolutions,” where established views of nature were overturned by more comprehensive ones. Paradigms in Kuhn’s view were: “universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (p. viii). These serve as bases for the activities of the scientific community. Newton’s view of the universe was the basic paradigm for physics for over 2 centuries. Einstein’s relativity theory eventually supplanted it. Kuhn described periods called “normal science” as times when the prevailing paradigm seems to work, in the sense that its relevant phenomena appear to be covered by the explanations it provides. But, often, anomalous findings appear that do not readily fit into existing explanatory schemes causing the scientific community to seek more adequate explanations eventuating in a shift away from the existing paradigm to form a new one.

A paradigm is a conceptual system of ideas shared by a community of practitioners, but it is a social construction as well. In fact one might say that allegiance to a particular paradigm is what creates a community of practitioners, and that by implication, the lack of a paradigm makes the formulation of coherent policies and practices difficult or impossible. In the arts, Arthur Danto claimed that what creates an artworld is the theory of art its members share. Moreover, paradigms are not permanent or absolute.

The art historian Suzi Gablik (1991) extends the notion of a paradigm to cover cultures or societies in saying that:

A paradigm is very powerful in the life of society since it influences the way we think, how problems are solved, what goals we pursue and what we value. The socially dominant paradigm is seldom, if ever, stated explicitly, but it unconsciously defines reality for most people, whose view of the world does not normally transcend the limits imposed by this cultural conditioning. (1991, pp. 2–3)

An educational paradigm covers the ways we think about the realities of schooling including students, teachers, curricula, and educational settings. It identifies goals to pursue and values to guide the selection and organization of content and activities. Before proceeding, it should be clear that the educational visions described in this section are not paradigms!

Distinguishing Visions From Paradigms

A vision is not a paradigm. It is a candidate for a paradigm! What makes a vision paradigmatic is its degree of acceptance within the professional community of art teachers, textbook writers, planners of curricula, students, and the public at large. The process of achieving paradigmatic status entails a discursive process through which a community like the artworld, the scientific

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1See Chapter Three entitled Visions of Progress in Art Education in Efland Freedman and Stuhr, 1996.
community, or the community of art educators achieves a relative degree of consensus. The educational visions put forth here are tentative or speculative proposals. If and only if they achieve a degree of acceptance in the marketplace of ideas will the vision become paradigmatic.

A vision might also be deemed a theoretical possibility, one that conceptualizes what shall be taught, to whom, with what results, and for what purposes? Paul Hirst’s (1963) distinction between theory in the scientific sense and theory as a term used by educational practitioners helps to distinguish the two.

In the case of the empirical sciences, a theory is a body of statements that have been subjected to tests which express our understanding of the physical world. Such tested theories are the objects, the end products of scientific investigation; they are the conclusions of the pursuit of knowledge. Where, however, a practical activity like education is concerned, the place of theory is totally different. It is not the end product of the pursuit, but rather is constructed to determine and guide the activity. (pp. 51–64)

**Models of Teaching and Curriculum**

Along with visions that may lead to paradigms, there are entities called models. Joyce and Weil (1980) offer a variety of educational models to identify alternative approaches to teaching, whereas Eisner identified several conflicting conceptions of curriculum (Eisner, 1971). Models are analytic devices used by students of curriculum to map the organization of ideas within a given educational setting. Here one studies their coherence, their consistency, and their perceived social relevance. To exemplify, if one believes that art is creative self-expression, then lessons that have the student copy pictures would make little sense. The practice can be said to be incommensurate with the theory. However, if one believes that art is an imitation of nature, then learning by copying to make imitations might be warranted. The idea of art as an imitation of nature and the view that learning occurs by imitation are compatible. In this example, one finds compatibility between a particular philosophy of art and the behaviorist view in psychology, which explains the acquisition of new behaviors by imitating the behavior of influential persons such as parents and teachers. Compatibility is no guarantee that the connection is based on a true connection. Ideas may be compatible yet wrong.

**The Role of Visions**

Educational visions play a role in shaping the educational imagination. One such vision arose in the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau’s novel *Emile*. Rousseau described the emergence of the child’s mind through its encounters with nature as a self-evident source of truth and goodness, free of social corruption. Rousseau ascribed all forms of evil to social influences; thus, his prescription of social reform was to educate children in the lessons of nature as a sufficient source of the good and the true. Social reform would begin by abandoning the traditional agencies of education involving church and state. In the years following Rousseau, educators like Pestalozzi and Froebel were inspired to base their instructional practices on nature rather than on books. The vision came from Rousseau, whereas the practice came from the latter. Progressive educators like Parker and Dewey also drew strength from Rousseau, and, in effect, his influence on educational practice lasted for more than 200 years. A great vision does more than advocate change; it inspires it! Rousseau’s vision had become paradigmatic.

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2 A working consensus implies that each is willing to accept the same foundational assumptions as a basis for their practice yet may take issue with particular aspects of the paradigm. Consensus does not imply absolute agreement.
The Past 100 Years

In the early 1900s the teaching of art was still synonymous with the teaching of drawing. Unlike drawing as taught in the 19th century, with its emphasis on geometry, drawing as a form of nature study became more prominent. Then, a bold new emphasis took hold based on *elements and principles of design*. Design had become a universal means to organize instruction both to produce works of art and to study their form. During the 1920s another shift occurred favoring *creative self-expression*. The new movement arose to free the imagination of students enabling them to express ideas and feelings by creative methods rather than by imitation. Then, as the Great Depression and World War II affected society, the emphasis shifted once again, from individual expression to the use of *art in daily living*—to art in the life of the community, the home, and workplace. Finally, curriculum initiatives inspired by the challenges of the Cold War gave rise to the teaching of *art as a discipline*. Instruction was based on the inquiries of artists, art critics, art historians, and philosophers of art. Before introducing the chapters, each with an emerging vision, I offer brief reviews of these past developments to illustrate the character of the previous visions that made an impact on practice in art education.

Elements and Principles of Design

Arthur Wesley Dow (1913) is generally credited with having introduced the teaching of art through such elements as line and color organized by specific principles of composition. He called it a “Synthetic method of teaching art approach[ed] through the teaching of Design instead of through Drawing.” Dow spent 5 years studying in French art schools only to find that the academic theory of art, which was the basis for the professional training of artists, had left him quite unsatisfied. His own account is quite informative:

In a search for something more vital I began a comparative study of the art of all nations and epochs. While pursuing an investigation of Oriental painting and design at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, I met the late Professor Ernest Fenollosa. He was then in charge of the Japanese collections, a considerable portion of which had been gathered by him in Japan. . . . He at once gave me his cordial support in my quest, for he also felt the inadequacy of modern art teaching. He vigorously advocated a radically different idea, based as in music upon synthetic principles. (pp. 4–5)

Dow’s pedagogy arose in an era when social Darwinism was an influential doctrine. Educators were urged to eliminate subjects that lacked social efficiency, with this defined by its survival potential. In the world of the tough-minded businessman, the artist had become a marginal figure. Then, it made sense to move art teaching toward such quasi-scientific doctrines as formalism. The art curriculum with the best chances of acceptance and survival was one that could demonstrate a structure organized in a scientific way. Art, like chemistry, was shown to have its elements and principles. Like the laws of science they were assumed to have universal applicability. The extraordinary complexity of the visual arts was reducible to a set of universal, teachable rules.

Creative Self-Expression

Advocacy for an educational vision based on creative self-expression can be seen in Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker’s manifesto, *The Child-Centered School* (1928). They contrasted

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3The statement appears on the dust cover of the 17th edition.
schools whose aim was social efficiency with those fostering creative growth. In their opinion organizing the school around models of industrial efficiency had lost credibility.

The aim of conventional education was social efficiency. Growth was seen as increasing power to conform, to acquiesce to a schooled discipline; maturity was viewed from the standpoint of successful compliance with social demands. In the new school, however, it is the creative spirit from within that is encouraged rather than conformity to a pattern imposed from without. (p. 3)

A number of gifted art teachers, including Franz Cizek in Vienna, Marion Richardson in England, and Victor D’Amico and Viktor Lowenfeld in the United States established pedagogies based on the premise that child art is inherently valuable in and of itself. A second premise was the idea that this is a vulnerable art, easily corrupted by inimical social forces. The child had to be protected from hostile influences poised and ready to crush his or her tender sensibilities. Children were encouraged to create their own art rather than imitate others.

But why had the change from the highly structured approaches of the early 1900s given way to self-expression in art? What led to progressive education? One reason may well have been the increasing popularity of Freudian ideas among artists and intellectuals that called into question the mechanisms of repression and neurosis as its consequence. Another may have been the rise of a large and well-educated urban, middle class responding to the rising pressures of urbanization and social conformity. Many questioned the standardized practices of public schooling as being inconsistent with democratic ideals.

Art in Daily Living

The economic optimism of the 1920s ended dramatically with the crash of the stock market in 1929 and the Great Depression that ensued. These events also brought about a transformation in art education theory and practice. Emphasis shifted from the study of timeless masterpieces to the application of art knowledge in the life of the common man. This is seen in the forward of Leon Winslow’s (1939) text on art education:

Activities that have become divorced from community life and purposes are perhaps suitable or even indispensable for a school purporting to give a timeless culture for its own sake, but they are unsuitable for a school as a living community. Art as a cult, as an esoteric experience for privileged devotees, may be an art that is needed in a school of the first type. Art as a service to men living a common life, art as a means of attaining community goals, is certainly needed in the modern school.

Similarly, Melvin Haggerty (1935) took pains to distinguish art in the American mainstream from the art of these sophisticated elites:

Art as the province of the sophisticated few lies outside the pattern of our thinking here. Art as a cult may be a hindrance rather than an aid to art as a way of life, and it clearly seems to be so in many cases. The teachers of art must be those of the broad and crowded avenues of life, the home, the factory, and the marketplace. It is this conception that must be clarified and dramatized in concrete ways if art is to take its place in the schools as a major and vital instrument of cultural education. (p. 41)

Art textbooks began to appear that were organized around such themes as art in the community or art in the home. These include books like Art Today (Faulkner, Ziegfeld, & Hill, 1942) and Exploring Art (Kainz & Riley, 1949)
The Discipline Orientation

In October 1957, as the cold war deepened, the Soviet Union launched its first artificial satellite, which resulted in a wave of criticism directed at the status of schooling in the United States. Science and mathematics had to be strengthened if the nation was to sustain its technological edge. Considering the ensuing psychological climate, it is easy to see how subjects like art and music might well have been dispensed with. However, several art educators felt that if art education was to survive, it would have to be approached as a "demanding and disciplined field" (Barkan, 1962). In an address before the Western Arts Association, Manuel Barkan reviewed the history of self-expression as a movement, arguing that it was an idea whose time was at an end. He began by recalling the revolution that resulted in self-expression:

...in my opinion the dynamic impetus and creative emergence of truly new conceptions of the teaching of art occurred primarily between nineteen twenty-five and nineteen thirty-five. That was the decade of sharp conflict, debate, and controversy, when old established conceptions about the nature of art met their demise, along with the academic teaching procedures which accompanied them. That was the decade when living, dynamic, and progressive thoughts in education and in the teaching of art began their full ascendancy. Those ten years were in fact the period in which truly new educational ideas were born. They were the years when the creative ideological visions were invented.4

Barkan (1966) presented his vision for art education and argued that artistic inquiry is structured and that the curriculum should be based on the kinds of questions artists deal with in their work. Art education conceived as a humanistic discipline would have as its principle task to lead students to ask similar questions. Moreover, in Barkan’s view, the artist should be accompanied by the art critic and art historian as scholars deeply involved in the interpretation of the human meaning questions raised by artists. Each offered modes of inquiry because the particular ways that they conceived and acted on such questions would be identical with the ways art educators should have students study art.

A chapter on discipline-based art education (DBAE) by Stephen Dobbs follows this introduction. Though DBAE was a vision that can trace its beginnings to the curriculum reform movements spurred by the Cold War tensions of the late 1950s and 1960s, the vision continues to change and evolve. In summarizing its history, Brent Wilson recognizes the differentiation of its practices by referring to DBAE as the “quiet evolution” (Wilson, 1997). A number of the educational visions presented in this section can be identified as modifications or outgrowths of DBAE. However, in all fairness, some authors regard their particular conception of the curriculum to be an outright repudiation of this particular tradition.

Table 30.1 summarizes the major characteristics of the dominant visions of 20th-century art education.

These visions inevitably spurred conflict with some being the result of simple inertia, a reluctance to change how things were done; but conflict was also driven by deeply felt divisions of opinion regarding the nature of art, the purposes of education, developmental issues, different beliefs about learning, and the like. Table 30.2 summarizes the issues in contention with each other.

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4The extracts quoted from Barkan appeared in the draft of Barkan’s address that was given before the Western Arts Association Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1962. They did not appear in the version published in Art Education.
30. EMERGING VISIONS OF ART EDUCATION

### TABLE 30.1
Four Dominant Visions of 20th-Century Art Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Nature of Art</th>
<th>Content and Methods</th>
<th>Value of Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Art 17th–19th Centuries</td>
<td>Mimetic aesthetics: Art imitates nature.</td>
<td>Copying from artists or copying from nature as in life drawing.</td>
<td>Values are found in the accuracy of representations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements of Design: Early 20th Century</td>
<td>Formalist aesthetics: Art is formal order.</td>
<td>Teach elements and principles through a sequence of exercises.</td>
<td>Values are found in the excellence of formal organization and in the resulting aesthetic experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Self-Expression: Early to Mid-20th Century</td>
<td>Art is an expression of the individual artist.</td>
<td>Free the child’s imagination. Eliminate rules. Don’t impose adult ideas or standards.</td>
<td>Values are found in the originality of personal expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art in Daily Living 1930–1960</td>
<td>Art is an instrument for enhancing the individual’s surroundings.</td>
<td>Apply knowledge of art and design to the home or community.</td>
<td>Values are found in the intelligent solutions to problems in daily life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art as a Discipline 1960–1990</td>
<td>Art is an open concept, a problem for artistic, and scholarly inquiry.</td>
<td>Base activities upon modes of inquiry used by artists, critics and art historians.</td>
<td>Values are found in the increased understanding of art.</td>
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THE STUDY OF VISIONS AS A MODE OF CURRICULUM INQUIRY

To be an educational vision within art education, three additional features need to be present that I call *continuity, revision, and depth-and-breadth*. These are explained in the following passages where I attempt to identify these attributes as they will appear in the chapters comprising this section of the Handbook:

**Continuity**

A proposed vision must show connections with aspects of past practices. If the new vision lacks continuity with art education’s past, it becomes a separate, unrelated narrative, not readily seen as part of the story of the field. For example, Parsons points to the attempts at integrated curricula in the history of the Progressive Education Movement. He reiterates certain aspects or approaches followed in the 1920s and 1930s, yet he also identifies differences between current initiatives and past practice. Similarly, Freedman and Stuhr see visual culture as a further elaboration of art education’s concern with popular culture. Earlier involvements were adversarial in character as past art educators strove to cultivate a taste for canonical masterpieces in order to wean students from the crass allurements of popular culture. Similarly, my chapter on imaginative cognition invites comparison with the creative self-expression that appeared in progressive schools of the late 1920s and 1930s. It differs from past efforts in drawing strength from recent advances in the cognitive sciences, and pursues a different
TABLE 30.2
Summations of Key Ideas in 20th-Century Art Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>20th Century Visions</th>
<th>Critique of Status Quo</th>
<th>Proposed Reform</th>
<th>Issues in Conflict</th>
<th>Claims for Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elements and Principles of Design</td>
<td>Voiced dissatisfaction with academic art teaching because it traditionally emphasized the human form, the most difficult subject.</td>
<td>Teach elements and principles synthetically starting with simple lines, shapes, and colors.</td>
<td>When first introduced it opposed drawing as the basis for art education.</td>
<td>Approaching the arts through universal elements and principles enabled students to discover beauty in all cultures and periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Self-Expression</td>
<td>Critiqued the growing emphasis on social conformity and loss of individuality in education.</td>
<td>Free the imagination. Eliminate rules. Don’t impose adult ideas or standards on children.</td>
<td>One of the first major culture wars that divided educators into traditional vs. progressive enclaves.</td>
<td>Freeing the expression of the child through the arts was warranted by claims to promote psychological health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art in Daily Living</td>
<td>Critiqued the imposition of elitist taste on the masses of people. Favored art and design to improve daily living.</td>
<td>Focus on problems in everyday life rather than on remote art masterpieces.</td>
<td>Opposed the excessive emphasis on the self and lack of a social focus.</td>
<td>Art is integrated into the daily life of the individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art as a Discipline</td>
<td>Critiqued the lack of disciplinary rigor and lack of structure in the teaching of the visual arts.</td>
<td>Focus the curriculum on the human meaning questions dealt with in the arts.</td>
<td>Opposed excessive emphasis on studio activities and superficial activities like holiday art.</td>
<td>Promotes the appreciation of works of art as well that of as artists, critics, and art historians for their contributions to civilization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

purpose for art education, namely, to argue for the enhancement of cognitive ability through art experience.

Revision

Though the new vision must demonstrate continuity with past traditions, it also must critique and possibly repudiate these traditions by offering changes in purposes and practices. Otherwise it merely continues to retain the same footing that supported past efforts. It must revise the historical narrative so that it can look forward to a different future. If it is unable to do this, the historical narrative merely continues or reaches its end. Furthermore, the critique has to propose the pursuit of alternate objectives, teaching methods or content. For example, though Freedman and Stuhr demonstrate the continuity of their vision with art education’s troubled connection with popular culture, they repudiate aspects of past practice, advancing new objectives and content. In a similar vein Dobbs’ chapter on DBAE repudiates creative
self-expression as a practice though DBAE continues to retain a studio component as one of the four sub-disciplines.

Depth and Breadth

The proposals offering visual culture and integrated curricula as alternative visions would promote change along a broad front, each with a potentiality to alter objectives of instruction, teaching methods, activities, not to mention the subject matter covered. But a vision might go into depth in a single area of knowledge. Barrett’s chapter is a personally reflective account of his journey from academic art criticism sometimes called “school-art-criticism” to criticism based on practices of critics operating in the real world of art. Though Barrett maintains allegiance to the discipline-based conception of art education (continuity), he questioned the lock-step procedures of academic art criticism and procedures like “aesthetic scanning” as ones offering false representations of what critics do in their efforts to develop adequate interpretations of artworks. His essay describes more than a shift in method; it documents research as conducted by a reflective practitioner, in this case himself. Through trial and error with critical methods used with students in various age groups, he shaped his personal vision of practice including the change over time in his own views of what art criticism entails as a practice and the ways it might be taught.

Similarly, Graeme Sullivan revisits the tradition of studio practice. Like Barrett, his is a personally reflective account of his experience in the dual role of educational researcher and artist. He reestablishes a connection with the tradition of art production that remains the dominant practice in art education classes. But his vision is built on the analogy between educational research as a scientific enterprise and the activity of artists as they investigate their experience and attempt to embody it in the various media of their particular art form. Here, studio practice becomes more than expression; it also becomes a thoughtful mode of inquiry and understanding.

As I end this introductory essay I realize that I have left certain questions unanswered. First, what kind of educational inquiry is the thought process that results in an educational vision? What kind of educational inquiry is it? Is it a form of educational research in the traditional (largely empirical) sense; and if so, what is the nature and object of such inquiries? Second, is the comparative examination of particular visions a fitting topic for educational investigation? Are such inquiries forms of curriculum inquiry? Is it policy study? These are questions I leave to readers to answer for themselves. In the final analysis, the reader has the final say in whether the visions offered herein are tenable ones for the future.

REFERENCES


Rousseau, J. J. *Emile*. (Several editions available).

