Editorial

In the summer of 1999, I had the pleasure of traveling by car with friends south along the Sierra Madre in the state of Chihuahua, to the Barranca del Cobre (Copper Canyon) region of Mexico. Copper Canyon is approximately four times larger than the Grand Canyon and is home to several communities of indigenous people (Tarahuman and Tepehuan) who practice an agricultural subsistence way of life. Many of the expansive vistas along the mountainside roads were simultaneously sublime and sorrowful. In order to view the awe inspiring landscapes it was necessary to travel a steep serpentine route dotted with small *capillas* or memorials marking the locations of loved-ones who had lost their lives in fatal auto accidents.

During this trip, I often experienced events that were not clearly interpretable through a dichotomous system of language or understanding. In other words, the experiences were culturally and socially complex. For example, while I found visiting the locales of indigenous people exciting. I was troubled by the tourist industry's impact on the peoples chosen lifestyle and cultural production. Tourism provides additional income to the various groups that occupy the area, but it has also driven several communities of Tarahuman and Tepehuan to locations that are less agriculturally productive. Cultural tourism is an expanding economic marketplace in this increasingly global community.

There were other times when I experienced feelings of isolation on the trip, partially, I assume, due to my appearance and inability to converse in Spanish. There was a heightened sense of self and social awareness in relationship to other people's identity where I felt *I* was viewed as *different*. I have had similar experiences on visits to Taiwan and Brazil, but as a light-skinned European male, this is a perspective I have rarely encountered in the United States. I can vividly recall a conversation I had several years ago with a friend from India. She told me about her accentuated sense of self-difference, and that she had never understood what it was like to be a *person of color*, until she arrived in the United States. It is apparent that the textures of communities are changing in the United States and all around the world. My point is that conceptual systems that polarize ideas of biodiversity, and in particular human differences (we/they, us/the, black/white) need to be openly critiqued, discussed, and reconceptualized.

On the cover of this issue of the Journal, a detail of Glenn Ligon's art: *Untitled (I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background)* is depicted. It was selected because it overtly asks the viewer to confront their perspective on sharpened differences about issues of racial identity. In his review of the artist's work, Patrick Murphy (1997) writes,

> Issues of identity have been the focus of much art of the past twenty years. Constructs based on race, ethnicity, and gender, or gender orientation, have framed the artistic strategies. Glenn Ligon is a suspicious interloper in these waters—willing to probe the questions but carefully not to be confined to the outcomes. He ably negotiates definition and undefinition, flickering between established codifications and destabilizing individuality. An appropriator, he eludes

the threat of his own identity being appropriated by simplistic no-
tions of blackness, gayness, artist, etc. His agility is evident in the
different media he employs in his practice: painting, photography,
installation, commentary. Ligon maintains a critical distance from
identity politics and, in doing so, creates a generous space for us all
to consider the knot of self-determination. (p. 7)

This issue of the Journal consists of three sections: invited essays and ac-
companying reviews, three anonymously reviewed articles, and a *Life Stories* spe-
cial feature. As we enter a new millennium, I thought we might take a moment to
reflect on and discuss past and continuing cultural issues in art education. Several
authors were asked to submit a short essay focusing on significant issues of
multiculturalism. I extend my appreciation to those ten who embarked on this ardu-
ous task and to the ten reviewers for their thoughtful responses. These essays look
at a wide range of meanings that are deeply connected to past and existing social
and cultural contexts in Canada, England, Spain, Taiwan, and the United States.

Raymond Williams (1958) used the terms: dominant, residual, and emer-
gent points of view as a way to understand how issues affect what we experience,
how changing perspectives influence the formation of diverse lifestyles, and how vari-
ous contexts contribute to our personal perspectives. Interpretations about multicultural
ideas and issues are seldom, if ever, settled for any length of time. Ideas of art and their
related interpretations change like a stream's many currents with different dimensions
and directions. Typically in society, one particular current is the strongest most domi-
nant point of view. From the many perspective's that different people hold, no one cur-
rent (perspective) ever seems to quite dry-up and its residual effect occasionally reap-
pears. When the conditions are right, a less powerful point of view might emerge and
assume more force and prominence only to decline when conditions particularly condu-
cive to its new found strength no longer prevails. Authors in this section address a flow
of ideas about multicultural education in art education.

In section two, Zhilong Shen and Chunmei Zhao discuss the historical de-
velopment of aesthetic education in China. Several influences of Western aesthetic
education are examined with more traditional philosophies of thought that empha-
size social and moral significance in China, i.e., Confucianism and Taoism. Also in
this section, jan jagodzinski, and Stephen Carpenter address one of the most press-
ing issues facing contemporary societies—racism. Dimensions of race within lived
experiences intersect all ideas and issues of multicultural education. In *Reading
Hollywood's Post-racism: Lessons for Art Education*, jagodzinski calls for a re-
evaluation of how postmodern racism is represented through contemporary films.
He draws examples from Columbus's quincentenary celebrations in the United States.
He writes,

In this essay, I want to argue that one form of such postmodern rac-
ism is presented by a particular Hollywood narrative that keeps re-
producing itself in a variety of forms so as to reconcile the incom-
mensurable and *impossible* settlement of peaceful co-existence be-
tween Peoples of the First Nations and governments who have in-
herited the legacy of their colonial past, e.g., Canada, United States,

Mexico, Australia, etc. Defined as *primitive* in terms of an older colonial discourse they provide a counter memory for reminding North Americans of their *past* colonial conquest mentality.

This article is theoretically complex and challenges art educators to take up issues of postmodern racism in films. jagodzinski believes that indigenous cultures must have a voice in educational settings to present an alternative view.

Stephen Carpenter equally challenges art educators and students in his article, *Thoughts on Black Art and Stereotypes: Visualizing Racism*. He believes that race has not been adequately theorized and that artists are often represented through art education in ways that lead to misunderstandings. Carpenter states,

In my understanding, *race* is a socially constructed label assigned to subdivisions of the human species (Appiah, 1996; Giroux, 1997; Goldberg, 1993; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992; Smith, 1997) that are based on a set of shared biological characteristics, the most obvious of which is skin color. Numerous scholars have made significant contributions to the scholarship of and about art made by black artists (Bearden & Henderson, 1993; Britton, 1996; Driskell, 1995; Fine, 1973; Lewis, 1990; Lippard, 1990; Patton, 1998; Thompson, 1983). But in attempting to define 'black people,' Smith (1997) writes, 'Unfortunately, no one has ever succeeded in producing an adequate definition of this social category' (p. 180).

Carpenter asks educators to become more critically engaged with art that confronts important social themes such as racism, stereotypes, oppression, and identity. He discusses the artwork of David Hammons, Glenn Ligon, and Adrian Piper as examples.

In the Life Stories Special Feature, Barbara Caldwell shares her research of *Narrative Portraits of Women in Iowa: Building Appreciation for Diversity*. The pursuit of equality as well as appreciation of differences has been a constant focus of Caldwell's artwork, teaching, and research. Recently, at a national conference on Women in Research and Education, an administrator in the audience, upon hearing her talk about the importance of multicultural education and equity, asked, "Why is this your problem?" She thoughtfully replied, "It's everyone's problem when anyone is treated unfairly." What is it that persuades some people to take a more active role in understand the need for multicultural education and understanding issues of diversity? What are your thoughts about this? Please join the conversation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Robert Bersson for his many years as a contributing editorial advisory board member. We have benefited greatly from his insight and guidance into exploring cultural and social issues in the field of art education. I would also like to welcome B. Stephen Carpenter II and Christine Ballengee-Morris as new reviewers. Their research interests in teacher education will be a welcome addition to the Journal advisory board.

References

Murphy, P. (1997). *Glen Ligon: Unlbecoming*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Williams, R. (1958). *Culture and society, 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press.