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# jCRAE

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# Editorial Introduction

Dipti Desai

Given that we now understand art production as a practice that shapes meanings about our community, nation and world, how we understand culture needs to be questioned in art education. It is this rethinking of the notion of culture and cultural difference that the articles in this issue of JCRAE address, and in doing so they open our understanding of culture. Blurring the boundaries between "us" and "them," and by focusing on different cultural and aesthetic spaces, the authors in this issue "explore the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p. 14). This is a crucial difference as it forces us to ask different questions about both art and culture when we think in spatial terms. As Trevor Paglen (2009) has argued considering art from the perspective of a spatial geography the question is not what is art?, but how is the space we call "art" produced in our hierarchically interconnected society. Similarly, we need to ask, how is the space we call "culture" produced in art education?

This means moving away from thinking about cultures as autonomous and distinct pure spaces that require us to forge dialogic relations across these separate spaces. Instead we should examine how a culture or community is formed as a culture or community "out of the interconnected space that always already existed" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p.8). Several of the articles in this issue question both historically and politically the ways we assume that places and spaces are given in art education; and instead they begin to explore the ways places, spaces, and identities are constructed, contested, and imagined. Some of the authors, by focusing on particular artistic interventions that disrupt dominant representations of culture (such as zines, performance, activist art, public installations), open up, as Jennifer Eisenhauer suggests, a rethinking of our understanding of these art practices as a "third space" (Bhabha, 1989) or border arts (Anzaldua, 1987).

In her article, Eisenhauer explores the ways zines written by people with mental illness create a community that challenges dominant representations of mental illness. She argues that zines, an interventionist artistic and cultural practice,

should be understood as a third space as it disrupts the boundaries between doctor/patient, consumer/producer, and reader/writer. By examining zines as part of an underground disability art movement, Eisenhauer positions mental illness as part of a larger disability culture that complicates our understanding of culture in art education.

How youth identities are constructed through art practices and visual material culture is the focus of Kristen Ali Eglinton's and Mary Stokrocki's articles. In particular, Eglinton's examines—through ethnographic means—how gendered identities are constructed through the interconnected web of urban spaces that youth encounter in their daily lives. She describes the multifaceted ways male youth in New York City negotiate their masculine identities through using visual material culture (fashion, websites, popular culture). Her article draws out the complex relationships between youth lives and identities, visual material culture, and the local places they live in and through. Here, place and space are interconnected—they are dynamic, productive, and call for a critical place-based pedagogy that requires both youth and art educators to explore the multiple identities that constitute places/spaces, and are experienced in different ways based on one's location in the field of power. Also using ethnography, Stokrocki transformed ethnographic notes into a performance script that was later performed by her graduate students. She describes not only the ways adolescents negotiated and reflected on their identities, but also what we can learn about identity and performance research.

Dealing with different historical periods and places, Cindy Maguire and Terry Lenihan, and Sharif Bey explore how community is created out of the spaces of socially engaged art practices that challenge dominant ways of understanding culture and art. In their article, Maguire and Lenihan argue that the changing demographic diversity in the United States shifts our understanding of the culture of art classrooms, and requires art teachers to enact, embody and assess their classroom practices from a social justice perspective. Drawing on their research they show that the arts can create a dialogic school culture where differences are explored and accepted, in the process building community. Bey on the other hand explores the role Czechoslovakian artists played in resisting the Soviet regime in the city of Bratislava in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He advocates opening up high school art practices in our country to include the ephemeral art practices that stem from this particular set of political and cultural circumstances.

In the spirit of opening dialogue across connected academic fields and also to disrupt the construction of a separate field we call art education defined by a set of cultural practices, I invited Marita Sturken to contribute an article to this issue. The last three articles in this journal feature two essays by art educators,

Kerry Freedman and Paul Duncum that "talk back" to a chapter written by Sturken (2007) called "Consuming fear and selling comfort " from her book *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero.* It is my hope as the editor of JCRAE to create a larger community of cultural workers who continually challenge normative ways of seeing, being, thinking and feeling.

Building this community is not a process that is done alone. I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have contributed to this journal as a one of the sites of ongoing transformation in art education: my colleagues on The United States Society for Education through Art (USSEA) board and in particular the editorial board of JCRAE, and my editorial assistant, Kate Brideau, without whom this journal would not have come together. I would also like to acknowledge the financial support and resources this journal receives from the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development, New York University—in particular Dean Mary Brabeck, Dean of Research Perry Halkitis, and Nancy Barton, Chair of the Department of Art and Art Professions—as well as the financial contributions of USSEA, the organization that produces this journal.

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# "I got a lotta respect for him ...":
# Boys' Use of Visual Material
# Culture to Negotiate Local Masculinities

Kristen Ali Eglinton

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of the ways in which boys in a New York City after-school club used visual material culture to negotiate aspects of their masculine identities. It draws upon a larger participatory visual-based ethnography that was originally intended to examine the ways in which youth in two communities (one in New York City and one in Yukon, Canada) used popular visual material culture in their everyday lives, and the role of local place in this process. Using an interdisciplinary conceptual framework, the author argues boys used visual material culture as a source and resource in making sense of, constructing, and negotiating local ideals of masculinity. In so doing, she begins to underline the complex relationship between youth lives and identities, visual material culture, and the local places they live with/in and through.

The purpose of this paper is to describe boys' negotiation of masculinity using visual material culture (e.g. fine art, pop stars, websites, fashion, and the like). It is drawn from a larger ethnography examining how youth in two communities (one in New York City and one in Yukon, Canada) used visual material culture in their everyday lives and the role of local place (i.e. sociocultural and physical landscape) in this process (Eglinton, 2008, 2009). In this paper, by zooming in on, and providing an analysis of, the multifaceted ways in which boys in the New York City site specifically used visual material culture to negotiate the masculine identities of themselves and others, my aim is to not only contribute substantive knowledge with respect to boys' gendered identities, but, more significantly, to provide an instrumental case (Stake, 2000) underlining the complex relationship between youth lives and identities, visual material culture, and the local places they live in and through. Boys from the New York City site have been selected as the focus of this paper as their use of visual material culture provides a particularly compelling example of young people's active participation in their identity construction and the power of local places to constrain and enable their self-making.

The ethnographic inquiry this paper draws on was developed in response to my own experiences as a visual arts and culture pedagogue, and as a means of answering back to empirical, theoretical, and analytical limitations in the art education literature. In my larger project I underlined several interconnected

issues: I noted how pedagogy in art education, which seeks to bring popular visual material culture (VMC) into the curriculum, is often characterized by a discrepancy between an "ideological analysis" frequently used in critiquing VMC, and the lived experiences youth are actually having with these forms (see Buckingham, 2003, pp. 316-317). I described one of my early experiences as an arts educator in the South Bronx area of New York City when I attempted to engage youth in a graffiti project:

> The image still haunts me: there I was, a twenty-five year old white woman from downtown Manhattan telling thirty-three black and/ or Latino 13 and 14 year-olds from the South Bronx about the meaning of graffiti: using my own experiences and perspective to teach youth about what, in many ways, could be considered their visual culture; "enlightening" young people to Haring and Basquiat, positioning myself as an authority. In fact, if pedagogy can be characterised as "interactive productivity"—a dialectic involving teacher, learner, and knowledge (Lather, 1991, p. 15)—this was not pedagogy.[1] (Eglinton, 2009, p.3)

I suggested that without an ethnographic understanding of what young people might "say, think or feel" (Hall, 1997, p. 3) about their visual material world, I could not expect to meaningfully engage with these (or any) young people (Eglinton, 2009, p. 3).

Inspired by my experiences, I highlighted a lack of systematic research in art education examining young people's everyday engagement with popular VMC. I argued many projects are limiting, as there is often an emphasis on ideological critique rather than on youth cultural practices (though *empirical* exceptions exist, for example: Addison, 2005; Darts, 2004; Elsden-Clifton, 2005; Levy, 2007; Springgay, 2003; Stanley, 2003). I illustrated how common theories driving practice and research in art education, based on aspects of modernism in art and cultural thought (Desai & Chalmers, 2007), are nonrelational and connectedly dualistic—separating, for instance, context, culture, and individual (Duncum, 2005; Gablik, 1991). I further underlined a "placelessness" (Nayak, 2003a, p. 11) to these theories: where youth experiences with VMC are considered decontextualised, rather than something active, situated, lived in and through social interactions constituting local places (Featherstone, 1991; Willis, 2000).

Addressing these issues, and hoping to find ways to connect with young people's experiences, I sought to understand the ways in which youth used, mainly popular, VMC in their everyday lives, and the role of place in this process by carrying out a visual-based participatory ethnographic study in two communities (again, one in New York City, and one in Yukon, Canada). These communities

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[1] Lather (1991) is discussing the work of Lusted (1986).

were chosen for analytical and personal reasons. Analytically, I was interested in various dialectics including, for instance, center/periphery. Personally, I argued social science research should seek out the voices of those often unheard and/or silenced (see Heron & Reason, 1997), and it was my observation that urban Black and/or Latino youth and rural First Nation (Aboriginal Canadian) youth, face various forms of exclusion from mainstream contexts.

Research questions narrowed in light of incoming data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). During fieldwork, I developed the more pointed question: How do young people use VMC to make sense of, construct, and/or negotiate aspects of self and world? Implicit in this question is a concern with place; the concepts of self and identity/ies are used interchangeably;[2] and world is appropriated from Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain's (1998, pp. 49-53) "*figured worlds*" including those spaces we construct and live with/in and through (e.g. the overlapping figured worlds of school or gender, as well as the figured worlds of youth in a particular area of New York City).[3]

Drawing on this study, in this paper I focus specifically on boys' masculinities in the New York City site. I briefly describe the interdisciplinary theoretical framework and methodological process that guided inquiry, before providing an analysis of how these particular boys used VMC to make sense of and negotiate local masculine identities. I conclude with implications for art education, touching on critical place-based pedagogy.

## CONCEPTUALIZING IDENTITIES, PLACE, AND CULTURE

I developed an interdisciplinary conceptual framework to support an understanding of young people's engagement with VMC as a relational, active, place-based process. Identities, in this framework, are conceived as always in process, contextual, multiple, and enacted and produced in and through human (inter)action in everyday life (Castells, 2004; Hall, 1996, 1997; Holland et al., 1998; Meinhof & Galasinski, 2005, p. 8). Space, in this framework, consists of flows of social, cultural, political and economic relations (Jess & Massey, 1995; Massey, 1993; Appardurai, 1990). Place is interrelated with space—place is "localised space" (De Boeck, 1998, p. 25). Place is dynamic, productive, and conceptualized as both material space (i.e. physical space) as well as the meeting place or nexus of intersecting social relations, dominant narratives, political structures, influences, and movements in space (i.e. sociocultural space) (Massey, 1993).

2  Drawing on the writing of Fraser (1999), I recognise the inextricable tie between identity and self; therefore, for sake of clarity and brevity, I use the terms interchangeably. I do not, however, do this unreflectively and I recognize there are literature and debates focusing on the relationship between self and identity.

3  Generally, figured worlds are part of local places and aspects of local places are part of figured worlds.

Identities and place connect to culture (including VMC), which is conceived as the medium of human engagement with the world, and the product of that engagement (Cole & Engestrom, 1993). Culture exists both outside and inside individuals: it constitutes our minds and mediates and produces our identities (Cole & Engestrom, 1993). Culture can only be understood and produced in relation to place, and could be thought of as patterns of artifacts, including VMC, as well as language, narratives, values, and the like (Cole, 1996; Mitchell, 2000). Drawing on the sociocultural theory of tool mediation, cultural artifacts mediate our actions. They are continuously used and their meanings are (re) created through practice and performance in everyday life—through interaction with the world including interaction with other people (Cole, 1996; Cole & Engestrom, 1993, Cole & Scribner, 1978; Packer, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1995).

Using the framework developed for this study, I argued that people cannot construct any identity they wish (Buckingham, 2003; Grossberg, 1989, p. 93). I suggested the construction of an identity is dependent on the availability of particular cultural artifacts, and the use of artifacts and meanings invested in them are dependent on individual lives, histories, and collective experiences, as well as on aspects of local place. Indeed, the relationship between people, place, and culture is dialectical and productive. People do not simply reproduce identities, culture, and places, but rather the mobilization of aspects including, for example, history and individual experiences in and through an always unique local-global nexus, leads to the (re)construction of new cultural forms—including new places, figured worlds, and identities.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

Seeking to get at the space where youth, visual material culture, and local places intersect, I used an ethnographic approach and worked as a researcher/artist in what I have called "Hope," an after-school club in New York City for over six months. I supplemented this with 13 weeks of fieldwork in a rural community in Yukon Territory, Canada.

Epistemologically the work was contextualized with/in sociocultural constructionist forms that conceive knowledge as continuously produced in and through human (inter)actions (Lincoln, 2001; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000). Insights from participatory inquiry (e.g. Reason & Bradbury, 2001) were central in guiding my relationship with the youth, and helped to ameliorate the kinds of power relations exposed through postmodern and feminist critiques, by opening up a space for youth voices and the possibility of transformation and empowerment through research. Throughout I remained aware of the fact that all researchers are positioned, knowledge is partial, and power and authority are

threaded through inquiry (Clifford, 1986). I used a series of strategies including collaborative visual-based methods to deal with some of these issues.

I employed a "new" or "postmodern" ethnographic approach to advance inquiry (e.g. in Fontana, 1994). New ethnographies critique researcher authority, and respond to the changing ontology of culture from a stable unit to a dynamic shifting process (Faubion, 2001). Marcus's (1995) "multi-sited" design (e.g. New York City and Yukon, Canada) enabled me to ethnographically conceive the complex, local nature of young people's cultural practices. Data presented in this paper draws specifically from the New York City site: Hope after-school. Part of a free, city-wide after-school program, and housed in a New York City high school, Hope is open year round and attended by hundreds of New York City youths ages 6 and up.

At Hope, I worked with between 28-34 young people, boys and girls, aged between 10 and 15; the youths were predominately black and/or Latino and all came from families living on an income below, at, or just above the poverty threshold. During fieldwork, I carried out a participatory, visual-based ethnography. My methods included participant observation and in-depth open-ended interviews, as well as participatory visual-based projects (e.g. youth produced videos, collage, and photography). Drawing on visual anthropology (see Banks, 2001; Pink, 2001, 2006), I believe participatory visual methods offer young people a chance to reflect on their lives and identities; access the space where youth lives, VMC, and local place intersect; and generate data from the perspective of youth themselves. Throughout my time at Hope, I spent my afternoons conducting interviews; engaging youth in visual media; or, more simply, sitting around cafeteria tables talking with young people, listening to music, and/or browsing through magazines together.

## BOYS' GENDERED IDENTITIES AT HOPE

In the following sections I focus on boys' gendered identities. I argue that masculine identities were continuously produced and negotiated at the site where youth individual and collective experiences, local places, and forms of VMC intersect. To make sense of this process, I draw on the concept of narratives where, appropriating Bruner (1990), I understand stories of masculinity as particular narratives constituted of overlapping values, discourses, ideals circulating localities and instantiated in embodied forms of VMC (see also Dimitriadis, 2001). For example, rap artist 50 Cent will instantiate a particular narrative of masculinity. I suggest that gendered identities are not only similar to, but are mediated by these narratives. That is, "gender narratives" (Eglinton, 2009, p. 256) both describe identities (types of masculinity) and are also cultural

artifacts that youth not only make sense of and use, but also negotiate in the construction of their gendered selves.[4]

## GENDER NARRATIVES FOR BOYS AT HOPE

Gender is not a natural or biological category, but rather a contextual social concept, actively negotiated through mediated social (inter)action (Gottlieb, 2002; Jackson & Scott, 2002; Thorne, 1993). As gender identities were open to reworking and negotiation, youth at Hope had to continuously make sense of multiplicity—find spaces of commonality/difference in order to understand their own identities. In order to do this, it seemed young people constructed stories of gender or gender narratives that helped them organize masculinities and femininities into, say, good/bad, hot/not (see Bruner, 1990, p. 56). VMC was a tool youth used to invest meaning in and to make sense of these narratives. In the following section, I describe how boys used embodied forms of VMC to make sense of and invest meaning in one overarching gender narrative circulating their figured world: the "gangsta."

**"Rappers are all gangstas . . .":** making sense of the gangsta narrative. From the day I started at Hope, I wondered if there was a common lexicon of boys' identity types, for example, the jocks or something more local such as Nayak's (2003a; 2003b) "Real Gordies." I listened, watched, even pointedly asked: "Are there types of boys, you know like jocks?" It was twelve-year-old Malcolm, well-versed in all things "youth cultural," who finally told me in an interview, "Boys don't do that really." And he added, "There are some people that are like gangsta." Malcolm was right, despite the fact that girls at Hope referred to various femininities (for instance tomboys), the only overarching narrative for boys at Hope (at least the only one youth consistently mentioned) was the gangsta, sometimes called "ghetto" type.

Drawn directly from VMC, for youth (boys and girls), the gangsta narrative was based on, and made sense of through, gangsta rappers and hip-hop aesthetics. Gangsta rappers represented the "archetypal" gangstas whom bell hooks (2004, p. 27) called the "essence of patriarchal masculinity." For youth at Hope, gangstas

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4  Because identity categories such as gender and race are interlinked, trying to write about gender alone, pretending for a moment I can suspend other identities, was impossible. This being the case, while I have made every effort to stay focused on gender, the findings I describe must be recognised as wholly integrated with and dependent on the many identity categories youth at once constructed and lived through.

Furthermore, sexuality and sexual orientation form one of those categories which gender works in relation to in the expression and experience of identities. Gender and sexuality share a special relationship, where Jackson and Scott (2002) define this relationship as instantiated through the heterosexual/homosexual binary in sexuality which "mirrors, and is interrelated" with gender (p. 14). In this paper, rather than conflating gender and sexuality, like Tobin (2000) I imagine sexuality as an aspect of gender in the production of romantic and/or intimate relationships, as part of the gender order where powerful narratives about sexuality constrain youth identities (see, for example, Connell, 2002), as well as relate to gender in much the same way that class, race, and nationality are part of identity configurations (Jackson & Scott, 2002).

were hyper-masculine, invested in violence, and epitomized survival. Gangstas were urban and invariably raced (or constructed) by youth as black (see also, Archer, 2003; hooks, 2004, p. 146).

Writing about racialized masculinities, O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000, p. 3) articulate the themes of "black macho," "black cool," and "black flash." These themes, I suggest, offer a loose frame for fleshing out the characteristics of the gangsta narrative constructed by boys at Hope. For example, beginning with black macho, which the authors describe as "hardness," boys such as 13-year-old Louis (known to be somewhat of a bully himself), told me: "gangstas act all big and bad." For these youth, gangstas were survivors. They had tenacity and were able to overcome adversity. Gangsta hardness also meant hyper-heterosexuality and sexist behavior. This understanding was drawn directly from hip-hop and gangsta rap, where gangsta hardness is coded in rap artists' talk of violence and survival, and in their sexist attitudes (Boyd, 2002, p. 117; hooks, 2004; Quinn, 2005).

Intertwined with hardness was "coolness" including "being 'laid back'—in effortless control" (O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000, p. 3). Majors (1990) describes the "cool pose" which includes a particular walk, style, and attitude. Hope youth included this cool pose performance as part of the gangsta narrative. It was a way of talking, walking, and being that mirrored the hardness and style of rappers. Part of cool pose included what O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) call "black flash" which connected with the exaggerated wealth of gangsta rappers. Sinewy, tightly wound, self-assured Freddie, who self-identified as "100% Boricua" (Puerto Rican) described the flash gangsta style by drawing on his lived experience at home in Spanish Harlem.

> Freddie: If you really want to go into the topic of gangsta, Harlem they wear like, I don't understand, but they think it's cool, but why do you still have to have the tag still on your hat, the tag still on your shirt? . . . I saw it the other day on the train. . . . Some guy had it on his pants. . . .

> Freddie: They think it's cool. I don't think it's cool. Why you gonna leave the tag on?

> Kristen: Who started doing that first?

> Freddie: Well the rappers and then people pick it up from the rappers.

Freddie's reference to rap artists in the context of his experience gets at a significant point: VMC was not only the basis of the gangsta narrative where hardness, coolness, style, and flash were derived from and constructed through VMC, it was also a means of making sense of the local masculinities which

intersected youth lives. More succinctly, VMC was both a source for producing, and a resource for making sense of, gender narratives.

## LOCALIZING GENDER NARRATIVES AT HOPE

"Masculinities," as Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002) wrote, "[are] accomplished through the exploitation of available cultural resources such as the ideologies prevalent in particular societies" (p. 3). In every community some "versions" of masculinity will be more dominant than other versions (Connell, 2002, pp. 81 3; Mac an Ghaill, 1994).[5] Indeed, as it is impossible to conceptualise gender apart from social context and from other social categories that give each other meaning (Archer, 2003, p. 21), the versions of masculinity that hold particular sway, for youth in certain places and times, will depend on local circumstances as well as on categories such as race, class, or sexual orientation (see also Holland et al., 1998).

At Hope—where the boys I worked with lived in and through various social inequities—the dominant or "popular" (Frosh et al., 2002) masculinity, was the classed and raced masculinity based on the gangsta narrative described in the previous paragraphs. Embodied as a black (and in New York sometimes Latino), hyper-masculine form, the gangsta masculinity was drawn from the boys' lived experiences and VMC, as well as propagated by the local "gender order" (Connell, 2002). Adapting Connell (2002), the local gender order, which is part of all local places, is made up of the dominant values and ideals of gender. It articulates the prevailing and compelling ideologies of communities, institutions, and nation-states that postulate the ways in which males should act and the roles they should take. For boys at Hope, masculinity was comprised of these enduring Western ideologies which were part of the prevailing gender order that traditionally held "real" men to be, for example, "tough, emotionally unexpressive, detached, responsible, and occupationally successful" (Majors, Tyler, Peden & Hall, 1994, p. 250). The gangsta masculinity for boys at Hope, therefore, was extremely powerful: it held popular and personal appeal for black and Latino youth living in an urban environment, as well as influential sway, as it was connected to and bore the imprints of more powerful overarching Western models of masculinity.

However, despite the significance of the gangsta masculinity, the boys at Hope did not (and could not) fully invest in all the ideals of this particular

5 Though contested, the concept of "hegemonic masculinity" drawn from Connell (e.g. Connell, 2002; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) is useful in imagining how forms of masculinity gain dominance not through force but through the transmission of ideals woven through the gender order; championed through community, through VMC itself, and through institutions such as schools. (See Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; for a summary of critiques on concept of hegemonic masculinity.) Archer (2003) helpfully wrote of "hegemonic masculinities" (p.15), and her of "local hegemony" "developed and utilized to account for the ways in which particular courses may be powerful, or hegemonic, within highly localized instances" (p. 16).

masculinity. It seemed that although the boys' lives may have resonated with some of the social experiences of gangsta rappers (i.e. living through difficult material conditions, growing up black or Latino in the inner-city), and although dominant ideals of masculinity that circulated place were influential and pervasive, the boys were active agents with individual identity combinations, families, and trajectories. It was, in part, these individual and collective local experiences that seemed to not only constrain their investment in various ideals (e.g. boys could not for various reasons fully invest in the hardness propagated by gangsta rap), but also were brought to bear on what the boys themselves considered to be the most important ideals of masculinity. In this case, of the countless ideals and valued qualities of masculinity drawn from both the gangsta narrative and gender order more broadly that boys revered, sometimes reworked, and consistently used in the negotiation and performance of their own identities, four were most profoundly evident in the data: toughness; survival; community, friends and family; and talent. As space is limited, I will focus here on toughness only and begin to illustrate how the boys used VMC to negotiate the meanings of this valued quality in resonance with their own experiences and material circumstances.

**"Why do you gotta go around with guns in your pocket instead of using your fists?":** negotiating toughness. For the boys at Hope toughness, found in both the gangsta narrative and in traditional constructions of masculinity, was the most esteemed ideal of masculinity. In concert with their own lives, boys seemed to produce this ideal in resistance to a gangsta toughness that postulated a hyper-masculine hardness asserted through violence, including gun use, and getting into "beefs" or fights with other rappers. All of the boys denigrated and rejected gangsta rappers' use of guns. As Malcolm flipped through pages of Vibe magazine he pointed to a picture of 50 Cent and spoke about the controversy surrounding a particular photo of the rapper holding a baby, with a gun tucked into the back of his pants. "He a coward," he told me. "I mean why would anyone be carrying a gun? He probably have a bullet-proof vest on right now." During an interview, Freddie also spoke about 50 Cent.

Freddie: Well I don't know 'cause I'm not gonna grow up like him he scared of everybody—

Kristen: Is he scared of everybody?

Freddie: Because well in my opinion, because why you gotta go around with guns in your pocket instead of using your fists? [Makes fists with hands]. You know like fists [punches the air]. . .

Freddie: I'm very against guns. If I ever got into a fight, just to let you know, whoever uses guns, they're cowards. I understand the cops that's a different story because they're protecting the world, but me? I would never use guns in my life. I would always use my fists.

As Freddie denounces the use of guns, and labels those who use them cowards, it could be argued that he resists the gangsta connection between toughness and gun use, without fully rejecting the ideal of toughness. Instead, negotiating between violence propagated in the gangsta narrative and a more traditional masculinity constituting the gender order in place that insists men stand up for themselves, Freddie at once reworks 50 Cent as a coward and, in a sense, reworks what it means to be tough: carrying a gun is now cowardly and using your fists is tough. Boys negotiated the meaning of toughness within the framework of their own lives, age, and family experiences which sometimes kept them from desiring or obtaining weaponry. For example, 10-year-old Jeremy, who had personal experiences with gangs, mentioned how his older brother told him to never under any circumstances carry a weapon.

Another aspect of being tough was staying out of trouble, not getting into beefs or fights with other rappers, and generally doing your own thing. Again, almost in opposition to the hardness and violence propagated by many of the gangsta rappers, boys talked about toughness as being able to, "say no to beefs." In an interview Jeremy mentioned, "Don't get in trouble, 'cause one time my brother put some place that he told us not to go and you know I don't want to end up there someday if I misbehave or whatever." Continuing to draw on hip-hop, the boys described VMC they believed embodied a toughness that was different from the violence and trouble-making of the gangsta rapper (even though many of the artists they cited would still be considered in this genre). Citing rapper Young Jeezy, 11-year-old Gabe from the Bronx spoke in an interview about staying out of trouble: "I got a lotta respect for him [Young Jeezy], you know, he's cool he doesn't look for no trouble he's just out there to make money the right way by makin' music he doesn't dis [disrespect] anybody." For boys at Hope, "respect" was not only a term, but also an organising concept: a means of articulating and measuring valued qualities of masculinities including toughness, survival, community, friends and family, and talent. In hip-hop vernacular, respect is a means of expressing honour, remembrance, or the outward expression valuing of friends, family, other artists (see Boyd, 2002). Here Young Jeezy is respected by Gabe for not looking for trouble.

Although the boys respected those artists who stayed out of trouble, this did not mean that one did not stand up for oneself. On the contrary, for the boys, an aspect of toughness was not letting people "step on you." The boys spoke

about VMC in which men stood up for themselves and their family and friends. Speaking about wrestler John Sena, Gabe remarked, "John Sena ...I know it's the business [wrestling] like to make the money, but to me, John Sena is like a person [who]...never backs down. He's always there to stick up for himself."

Finally, being tough was about having tenacity and determination. Drawn directly from gangsta rap and hip-hop, this trait was not reworked by boys, but understood through gangsta rappers. Tenacity was spoken about in the context of artists who had been through hard times and kept going or who always knew what they wanted and worked hard to get it. During an interview, Jeremy spoke about 50 Cent and compared 50's determination with his own: "You know, he know his whole life that he wanna make music, and he did it, and I will do it too."

Overall, the boys did not simply mirror the ideals of toughness or hardness as they were constructed by the popular gangsta masculinity or by the dominant gender ideologies in local place more broadly, but rather drew on, and reacted to and against forms of VMC, bringing VMC into concert with their own lived individual and collective experiences. It seemed the boys needed to constantly negotiate between the powerful meanings of masculinity, which are part of places, and conveyed through VMC and their own individual lives and material circumstances. VMC played a central role in this negotiation: not only were various ideals and, more broadly, narratives embodied in VMC, but youth used VMC as a further resource to continuously negotiate and actively rework the meanings of these ideals: to, in a sense, negotiate new local masculinities.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As noted at the beginning of this article, one of my aims was to contribute a singular analysis of the ways in which these particular boys' in New York City used VMC to negotiate aspects of their masculinities; however, my more significant agenda was to demonstrate the complex relationship between youth lives and identities, local places, and visual material culture. My intention was to offer a small slice of the larger ethnography—in a sense, provide a case—that would start to exemplify the ways in which young people's engagement with VMC is relational, active, at once personal, collective, local (and global). Although multiple implications for art education can be drawn from this cultural analysis (see Eglinton, 2009) here I simply suggest this analysis points to the importance of theoretically, empirically, and pedagogically (re)positioning youth as active agents who participate in the construction of their own identities. Further, it underlines the need to (re)conceptualise culture, places, and identities (including identity markers such as race and gender) as fluid, relational, and dynamic (see, Desai, 2003; Dolby, 2001; McCarthy, Giardina, Harewood & Park,

2003). Finally, this analysis points to a crucial need for understanding VMC as important "tools of identity" (Hannerz, 1983) and for a deeper reflection and emphasis in art education on the ways that young people's use of VMC in the construction of identities is linked to local places, which I found to constrain and enable youth actions, meanings, and practices.

In this sense, I would suggest a critical place-based pedagogy (Gruenwald, 2003; see also Graham, 2007; Gruenwald & Smith, 2008) offers promise for art education.[6] Rather than focusing strictly on ecological issues, a critical place-based pedagogy summons youth and educators alike to explore the multiple identities constituting places, and the ways in which those identities are constructed and continuously transformed in concert with the dynamics of localities (Freire & Giroux, 1989; Graham, 2007; Gruenewald, 2003). What is more, critical place-based pedagogy brings together the importance of transformation through critique and the examination of ideology, injustices, and inequality—three powerful aspects inevitably threaded through young people's use of visual material culture in actively constructing and negotiating their selves and worlds.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE:

6   Place-based education is pedagogy that takes into account the local social and natural communities within which students live out their lives. A great deal of place-based education is focused on ecological concerns, much of it targeting concerns of rural and/or indigenous communities (e.g. Bequette, 2007).

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# Writing Dora:
## Creating Community Through Autobiographical Zines about Mental Illness

Jennifer Eisenhauer

ABSTRACT

This paper explores zine writing by people with mental illnesses as a form of community building that challenges dominant, stigmatizing representations. The ways in which zine authors disrupt doctor/patient, consumer/producer, and reader/writer boundaries is investigated as providing insights into alternative ways of identifying and forming mental health communities. The author argues that these zines, as part of an underground disability arts movement, position mental illness as a segment of a larger disability culture. In its conclusions, this article suggests that it is imperative for art educators to complicate their understandings of culture and disability in order to recognize disability as a complex culture.

## INTRODUCTION: IN THE MIRROR OF POPULAR CULTURE

After class one of my students who was preparing to do a presentation on the popular representation of mental illness in an upcoming class stood on the outskirts of the classroom shifting her weight from side to side until the other students finally left. She came seeking advice on how to negotiate her personal experience of mental illness during her presentation. She thought that the other students had largely not had similar experiences and that they had gained much of their understanding about mental illness from television more so than from their own interactions with others. Students approaching me wanting to talk about their own experiences with mental illness has become increasingly more common after I "came out" about my own experiences of living with bipolar illness. However, what struck me the most in this conversation was that when she mentioned that she had been hospitalized, she whispered. There was nobody in this room except for her and me, and still she whispered as we stood in front of a closed door.

## WHY DO WE WHISPER OUR STORIES?

Should I whisper my own? Following my initial diagnosis and hospitalization for bipolar illness in the spring of 2004, I searched for an understanding of this aspect of my identity. While I was in the hospital, I asked many questions trying to gain a better understanding of what might lie ahead for me and finally a doctor, who was probably tiring of my questions, suggested that I read Kay

Jamison's (1996) memoir, An Unquiet Mind. After receiving the copy my husband searched to find in our local bookstores, I was particularly taken with Jamison's story: "Within a month of signing my appointment papers to become an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles, I was well on my way to madness; it was 1974 and I was twenty-eight years old" (p. 4). I had just signed my own contract for my first position as an assistant professor, also at the age of twenty-eight, and I felt an immediate connection with Jamison's story. Her narrative represented the experience of living with bipolar illness rather than simply a medical account or a reinforcement of stigmatizing representations. Perhaps this was the beginning of my ongoing search for other stories through which I could form a community, extending beyond the confines of geographical location, with others impacted by mental illness.

I began my search for other stories within the zine community and particularly within what are called personal zines (perzines), which are small independent publications in which people share autobiographical stories. I have read personal zines for many years and have already come to appreciate the honest and private narratives that zine authors share about their life experiences. Two zines, Miranda Hale's The Pleiades and Rae's Suburban Gothic, were especially meaningful for me because of the ways that the authors wrote about their own experiences of living with mental illnesses. These two zines were a significant personal motivator and encouraged me to tell my own story in a zine I titled 27 Days.

In this paper, I will explore how autobiographical zines represent a critical and artistic practice that addresses cultural stigmatization. These zines mark an intersection of dominant narratives about people with mental illnesses and the narratives that people tell about their own lives, and provide insight into how autobiographical and independently circulated writing confronts stigmatization, creates community, and unsettles limiting dominant discourses. I identify zine culture and zine writing about personal experiences with mental illness as a critical practice at the intersection of the consumption and production of popular culture, and position zines as part of the disability arts movement. Likewise, zines about mental illness help to situate mental illness as part of disability culture.

I begin with an exploration of the zine itself, its production, and its cultural meaning and then examine the ways in which personal zine narratives about mental illness challenge binaries such as doctor/patient and consumption/ production. I then explore the ways in which zines can be understood as part of the disability arts movement and the implications for disability culture. And in conclusion, I suggest that it is integral for art educators to complicate understandings of culture so as to recognize disability as a complex culture.

## WHAT IS A ZINE? THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ZINE CULTURE

At the most basic level, differences emerge between magazines and zines in regards to zines' production and circulation. While magazine production is often motivated by profit, value within zine culture is located in the construction of a discursive space through which to challenge dominant cultural narratives and, in so doing, to form new communities that trouble the limitations of geographical, social, and cultural boundaries. As Zobl (2004) described, the "mainstream media fails to provide a venue for many people.... In response, some have taken the tools of cultural production into their own hands" (p. 156).

Zines are about creating connections with people. In addition to the connections created through the actual reading of others' zines, zinesters come together in virtual spaces such as online message boards and listservs, as well as at zine festivals and conferences. These personal connections with others are important. Therefore, in purchasing, reading, and writing to a zinester, I am constantly aware that someone wrote it, that someone touched it, and that someone sent it. As Atton (2002) described:

> Zines are created precisely for people to communicate through them – they are multiple objects created by different producers to reflect and construct a complex of social realities. There is an emphasis on the act over the result, at least to the degree that success is not to be measured by quantity of response or circulation. (p. 67)

Zines are constructed as a kind of call and response. Zinesters include their own mailing and email addresses in their zines and encourage those that read their work to dialogue with them. On this level, the roles of readers and writers are blurred. As Atton (2002) described, "the very format of the zine—with design and production values that owed more to the copy shop than the printing press—encouraged readers to become editors themselves" (p. 23). As a form of call and response, zine cultures are often described as vehicles for creating community amongst people who are in multiple geographic locations. Steve Duncombe (1998) wrote, "The narratives give keys to decipher a world that lies below the straight world, in front of 'normal' society's eyes but invisible to their gaze. Zines offer a shadow map of America" (p. 434). Anita Harris (2001) identified the location of young girls and women's zine cultures in the underground as a political choice. She suggests the location of girls' zine networks underground should not be seen as a "failure of access to or possibilities with the public," but rather as an "active choice" on the part of these zinesters (p. 130).

Zines can be understood as a third space as Licona (2005) proposed in "Borderlands' Rhetorics and Representations: The Transformative Potential of Feminist Third-Space Scholarship and Zines." She borrowed the term "third

space" from Sandoval's discussion of "third-world feminism as 'third space' feminism" (p. 105). Licona has written,

> Third space can be understood as a location and/or a practice. As a practice it reveals a differential consciousness capable of engaging creative and coalitional forms of opposition to the limits of dichotomous (mis)representations. As a location, third space has the potential to be a space of shared understanding and meaning making. Through a third space consciousness then dualities are transcended to reveal fertile and reproductive spaces where subjects put perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances into play. In third space sites, representational rhetoric moves beyond binary borders to a named third space of ambiguity and even contradiction. (p. 105)

Similarly, Perez (1999) described feminist third space as an "in-between space" in which the "decolonizing subject" negotiates "new histories" (p. 5; see also Licona, 2005). According to Perez this is an interventionist site through which alternative consciousness can arise. When understood through the theoretical frames of feminist third spaces, the blurring of consumer/producer boundaries becomes central to our understanding of zines as an artistic practice and culture. Third space is a site of meaning-making and not simply meaning-consuming. Zinesters' forms of production offer both an alternative popular culture that is more disruptive than assimilationist and a form of alternative histories.

It is this collective body of historical and contemporary representations that form the backdrop upon which the contemporary zine narratives about living with a mental illness that I examine are situated. Miranda Hale began publishing The Pleiades in 2002 and has since published sixteen issues. Miranda Hale's zine is a perzine in which she shares a variety of narratives about her life. She has written about her experiences living with an anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and bipolar illness. When asked why she writes about her experiences with mental illness, she replied:

> I believe that it's important to write about aspects of ourselves that we're not supposed to speak about—things that are stigmatized or judged negatively by society.... In order to remove the stigma and shame of dealing with mental illness or any other stigmatized quality/ aspect of self, we must write/speak about them clearly, openly, and without shame or fear. Only then will these things come out of the metaphorical closet and become a more acceptable, less shameful thing to talk about. (Personal interview, October 25, 2005)

Rae began publishing Suburban Gothic in 2003 and has since published seven issues. Rae has also created a perzine in which she includes multiple narratives from her everyday life. In her zine she shares her experiences with depression and borderline personality disorder. She described why she chose to write about her mental illness:

I have three main reasons for writing about mental illness in my zines. The first is that honestly, it helps me cope. It helps me sort things out, in my head and on paper.... Secondly, by writing about mental illness, I aim to break the silence surrounding mental illness and break down the stereotypes. Giving voice to it through my zines provides a more real alternative depiction of a person with mental illness than something ridiculous like a Jim Carrey movie. It's my way of fighting back, and saying that I won't let mental illness or the stigma and stereotypes about it silence me.... Thirdly, I want to open and encourage dialogue on the subject. That also ends up helping to break down stereotypes and stigma, but it also contributes to an awesome support community, particularly among people who make zines.... I wish I'd known about zines before I was hospitalized, because part of what made my own "craziness" so bad was feeling like there was nobody I could trust, nobody who felt the same way I did and had similar experiences. (Personal interview, October 10, 2005)

Zine culture is a space in which people can write freely about matters of personal importance and form communities with others with similar experiences. As Rae stated, zines can be catalysts for dialogue:

[S]haring stories and experiences and voices has the benefit of making connections, and in making connections, you don't feel so alone in your life, even when it's at the absolute worst.... knowing that someone else feels and thinks the same things you do and has experienced similar things can give you the courage to tell your own stories as well, and the more people tell their stories, the more awareness is spread throughout society. (Personal interview, October 10, 2005)

This kind of dialogue was a personal motivator as I made the decision to write my own zine. Reading zines was no longer enough and I wanted and perhaps needed to more actively be a part of this community. Zine culture made me realize that I was part of a larger disability culture. With great reservation, I published my first zine titled 27 Days in 2004, which is based on twenty-seven days of journal entries from a time I was hospitalized.

## ZINE CULTURE, THE DISABILITY ARTS MOVEMENT, AND DISABILITY CULTURE

Zine culture can be understood as part of the disability arts movement and a larger disability culture. In conceptualizing the disability arts movement, it is important to recognize the contributions of zine culture and other "underground" artistic practices, which are often left out of the discussion (Barnes & Mercer, 2001; Hevey, 1993; Swain & French, 2000). The disability arts movement refers to work created by "disability artists" who differ from "disabled people doing art." The work of "disability artists" "offers a critical response to the experience of social exclusion and marginalization" (Barnes & Mercer, 2001, p. 529).

Often the creative work of disabled people has been situated within therapeutic discourses that focus more on the role of art as rehabilitation than art as critical intervention. In regards to people with mental illnesses, we especially have had our forms of creative production appropriated and co-opted within discourses of psychiatric art collections and Outsider Art. The crucial difference remains that disability art focuses on the experience of impairment and offers forms of self-representation within a dominant culture that most often represents disabled people. As Hevey (1993) wrote:

> In the history of disability representation…we find a history of representation that was not done by us but to us…. Disabled people have been the subject of various constructions and representations throughout history but disabled people have not controlled the object—that is, the means of producing or positioning our own constructions or representations. (p. 423)

Zine culture is an important contribution to conceptualizing the disability arts movement and disability culture more broadly. The definition of disability culture, like most cultures, is debated, contested, and multiple. Susan Peters (2000) argued that disability culture is syncretic, involving a coming together of three worldviews of culture: culture as historical/linguistic, socio/political, and personal/aesthetic. The historical/linguistic view of culture emphasizes a common language, a historical lineage that can be traced textually, evidence of a coherent social community, political solidarity, acculturation within the "family," generational/genetic links, and pride and identity in segregation. The socio/political view involves a coming together of disabled people "to form a community based on cultural notions of solidarity, but not necessarily with a unified voice" (p. 593). The personal/aesthetic worldview suggests that it is through "personal interpretations of life experiences [that] an individual creates a cultural identity as disabled…. The body becomes a metaphor for culture, where culture is created from whole body experiences, and the disabled body is the interpretive force for cultural identity" (p. 594).

In Barnes and Mercer's (2001) chapter, "Disability Culture: Assimilation or Inclusion?", they argued that the disability arts movement and self-representation are particularly important to disability culture given the ways in which disabled people have been represented especially in popular culture. However, in forming their argument they exclude examples of representations of mental illness from their discussion. This is a common problem across discussions of the disability arts movement and disability culture that overlook mental illness as a disability centering instead on the theorization of disability in relationship to physical disability. Therefore, zines about mental illness are an important example of an art form that focuses on the critique and disruption of dominant forms

of representation of mental illness and are an important contribution to the disability arts movement. As Finkelstein and Morrison (1992) argued:

> Only by ensuring an integrated role for disability arts and culture in the struggle can we develop the vision to challenge narrow thinking, elitism and dependency on others for our emancipation. To encourage the growth of a disability culture is no less than to begin the radical task of transforming ourselves from passive and dependent beings into active and creative agents for social change. (As cited in Barnes & Mercer, 2001, p. 529)

This desire to become an "active and creative agent for social change" informed my decision to write my own zine, which was a collection of writing and visual works.

## SHOULD I LOWER MY VOICE?

When I first published my zine, I adopted the pen name Dora. For me Dora represented the silencing of women with mental illnesses. Freud's Dora became her diagnosis. She was not a person with "hysteria," but rather she became "hysteria." As a woman with a mental illness, Dora represented my history, present, and possible future and reflected the irony of trying to speak when everything said becomes viewed as a "symptom" of my "abnormality." As Kuppers (2007) wrote, "once a patient is labeled with a condition, her utterances are not necessarily regarded with the same degree of openness as a nonlabeled patient might expect" (p. 60).

My use of the name Dora also represented fear. I feared publishing this autobiographical zine using my given name because I was concerned about how being identified as a person with a mental illness would impact my personal and academic life. Would my students continue to respect and seek out my perspectives and judgments? Would my colleagues think me capable of surviving a life in academia? Would my research be called into question within the rational discourses of academia? For these reasons among others, I remained in the closet and continued to "pass" as a "normal" person. I felt like a silenced person and Dora was a fitting name.

However, writing and publishing my zine enabled me to share my story with others and empowered me to begin the process of challenging in my writing and teaching the very things that imposed limitations and fostered my fears. So, while I tried to separate my zine from my academic life, in the end the zine did something I did not imagine. It changed my academic life.

## POPULAR CULTURE, STIGMA, AND WHISPERING SUBJECTS

In the mirror of popular culture, people with mental illnesses are dangerous, aggressive, homicidal maniacs, people who should be kept out of a community.

The mirror of popular culture is large including television, films, magazines, newspapers and places such as haunted houses. In the mirror of popular culture they are child-like, unable to perform everyday adult roles, lost and confused, unemployed, homeless, and without a family or friends. In the mirror of popular culture, they are untrustworthy, a social outcast, a sinner, and a savant. Within medical discourses, they become their diagnoses. And when they protest, speak up, or come out, they are often called an anomaly, an exception to the rule, because they don't resemble what people think mental illness looks like. Perhaps, the only thing that is worse than staring into the mirror of popular culture, is when people with mental illnesses believe that those representations are who they are or who they will become.

Autobiographical zines about mental illnesses are situated within this culture of stigma where the body is literally and metaphorically marked as abnormal. Zinesters' texts are about and in response to their own stigmatization. While stigma is defined literally as a wound and a mark of disgrace, in the context of dominant representations of mental illness, stigma is a form of cultural wounding. The decision to speak up, to question, and to critique is to brand oneself; it is a form of public self-mutilation, a positioning of oneself on the side of the irrational, an act that alone might be seen surely as a form of "madness." However, this is exactly what the zinesters discussed in this paper do. Miranda Hale, Rae, and I elect to speak up in a cultural atmosphere that dictates that it is better to "pass" than to "come out." Each of these authors in varying ways writes as a means through which to make change in their worlds. As Miranda, author of the Pleiades stated: "only when we write/speak about [these issues] clearly...will these things come out of the metaphorical closet and become a more acceptable, less shameful thing to talk about" (Miranda Hale, Personal interview, October 25, 2005). Rae also suggested that zines can become a means through which to critically address issues of cultural stigmatization:

> I feel like people really don't understand mental illness at all. It's such a stigmatized thing, and the popular portrayals in the media are so sharply polarized to one ridiculous extreme or the other—either a deranged, homicidal psycho, or a big funny joke. (Rae, personal interview, October 10, 2005)

If stigmatization is a cultural marking of the body, then the personal stories shared in zines represent a cultural re-marking of the body and a form of healing as cultural critique. As Miranda Hale described, "Having the courage to say, 'No, this isn't okay' is incredibly empowering, and I think this sense of empowerment is in itself a kind of healing" (Personal interview, October 25, 2005). Therefore, zine writing does not exist outside of or beyond cultural stigmatization. Zines

confront dominant popular discourses and are written through stigmatized bodies and stigmatizing experiences.

At times, zine authors appropriate images from popular culture and material culture that become juxtaposed against their own writing. In Figure 1, Rae (2004) juxtaposes a narrative about her history of taking medication and her beliefs toward medication on a backdrop of Zoloft packaging. The text in this section reads:

> My point of view was partly influenced by my upbringing. My mother was a firm believer in home remedies. Her cure for a cold was orange juice and chicken soup. Not Tylenol Cold. My environment with respect to medication was one of 'only when absolutely necessary.' (p. 32)

Rae's collage-like practice of juxtaposition serves to create questions through the seams formed between her personal narrative and medical discourse. It is a reclaiming of visual and material culture on one's own terms and for the purposes of one's own questions.
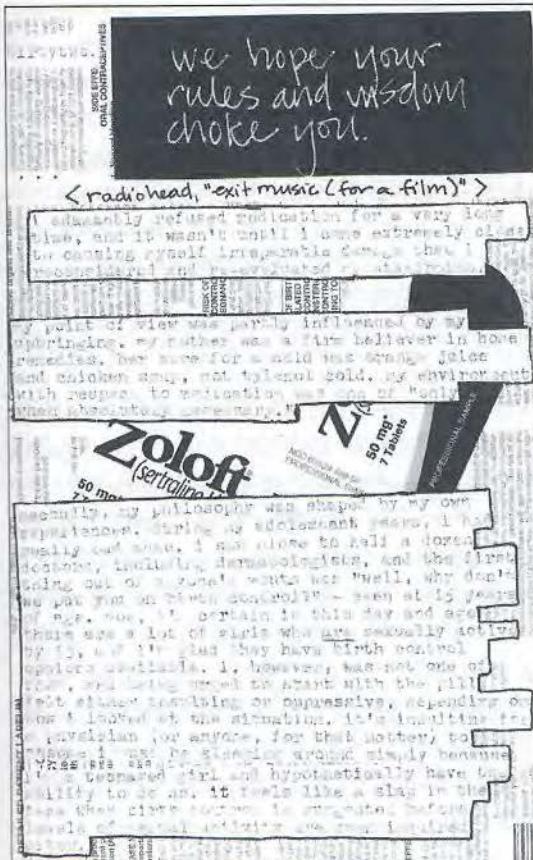


Fig. 1
Page from
Rae's Suburban Gothic, 2004

## DOCTOR, ARE YOU LISTENING?
## CRITIQUING MEDICAL REPRESENTATION

Zine authors also critique medical discourses as locations of lost agency. In The Wounded Storyteller, Arthur Frank (1995) argued that the ill person's narrative becomes a part of a medical discourse. According to Frank, a doctor's asking, "How are you?" requires the patient "to tell her story in medical terms.... The physician becomes the spokesperson for the disease, and the ill person's stories come to depend heavily on the repetition of what the physician has said" (p. 6). Sharing one's illness narrative constructs a counter-narrative in which patients can acquire agency. Through this sharing of stories, zinesters can reclaim themselves as subjects within medical discourses. Couser (1997) described the collaborative narrative between patient and doctor as one-sided:

> [P]atients submit their bodies to tests, their life histories to scrutiny, while doctors retain the authority to interpret these data. By means of this process (interrogation and interpretation) the physician reconfigures the sick person's illness as the patient's disease. (p. 10)

In Suburban Gothic #3, Rae openly discusses her experiences with depression including its origins, its evolution in her life, and its consequences in a language very different than that of the typical medical model. Her (2004) zine provides another way through which to understand the experience of depression when she wrote:

> Being depressed is like walking around in a half-awake daze, like a perpetual nightmare, where you try to run away but your legs won't move fast enough, like they do when you try to run in a swimming pool's middle section water up to your chest. The harder you pump your legs, the slower you move. Being depressed is like having those kinds of nightmares every night and not being able to ever fully wake up. The nightmare has you in its grip and you cannot escape. (p. 26)

As Otto Wahl (1995) described, "Words have power. Words reflect and shape prevailing attitudes, attitudes that in turn shape social behavior. The words used by mass media to refer to mental illnesses...have such power making it important to consider those words and the ways they are typically used—and misused" (p. 14). Within zine writing the power of words becomes something that can unsettle objectification rather than reinforce it. Zine writing uses language, which is often the vehicle for stereotypes and a root of objectification as a way of beginning a shift from having one's story told to telling one's own story. Within medical discourse the power of writing can be located in one example within the patient's chart in which the patient's narrative becomes translated into medical language raising questions regarding what is lost in translation and what can and cannot exist within medical discourses.

In my (2004) zine, I wrote about my experiences of being objectified and pathologized within the contexts of the psychiatric hospital:

> How am I feeling? My [medical] team asks me this question every day. The team is comprised of my psychiatrist, two medical students, one social worker, and periodically a few other people who I can't identify. They all sit silently except for the psychiatrist. A minimum of 8 eyes, 4 separate gazes staring at me and asking: How are you feeling today? How am I feeling? I am feeling like I want to escape your gaze. (p. 8)

The psychiatric hospital becomes emblematic of the pervasive objectification and fear of those with mental illnesses. Shrouded in a veil of curiosity and fear, the psychiatric hospital within dominant discourses is problematically viewed as a loss of self so severe as to require a form of cultural suspension. In many ways, the psychiatric institution becomes a physical and metaphoric location in which the public justifies its objectification of the "mentally ill" Other.

In one sense, my zine became a subversion of the medicalization of my own narrative within institutional discourses. My narrative also "escapes" this institutional context by situating a speaking subject within a deeply engrained cultural practice of isolating and sending people with mental illnesses away. The isolation of people with mental illnesses can be located metaphorically and actually in the cultural practice of, and supporting ideas behind, sending people with mental illnesses to asylums and psychiatric hospitals to live. However, even when not literally confined between four walls, people with mental illnesses experience a daily confinement resulting from the pervasive and devastating experience of stigma.

It is from within the context of these forms of confinement that zinesters' autobiographical accounts of their experiences with mental illness in self-published zines emerge. Subverting one's own confinement is important to how these zines function for the individual author and within larger cultural discourses surrounding mental illness. In one way, zines create community by aiding in forming connections with other people by sharing stories through reading and writing as a form of change and support rather than profit or medical performance.

In my zine, I visually explore the medical discourse surrounding mental health through a juxtaposition of contemporary signifiers and historical images. All three images in Figure 2 use a late 19th century photograph by Londe and Charcot titled "Photophobic Hysteric." This ironic image of a woman pathologized for not wanting her picture taken is juxtaposed with the contemporary images of a line drawing of bread, a hospital bed, and a neuron. Much like the juxtaposition discussed in Figure 1, these juxtapositions serve to raise questions about the interrelationship of contemporary and historical medical discourses of mental illness.

Zine writing about personal experiences with mental illness contrib[...] important objections to both popular culture and medical discourses. W[...] popular culture, the zine author experiences the multiple and repea[...] representations of people with mental illnesses that both produce and reinfo[...] existing stereotypes and further the cultural processes that lead to stigmatizat[...] Likewise, within medical discourses, people reconfigured as "patients" ofte[...] experience the loss of their personal narratives and agency even though the[...] might be asked multiple times by doctors to "share" their stories of the experien[...] of illness.



Three images from Dora's 27 Days (Jennifer Eisenhauer) 200[...]

## DISABILITY CULTURE, MULTICULTURALISM, AND ART EDUCATION

Zine writing and the social and cultural contexts within which it is produced and circulates exemplifies that it isn't simply as easy as speaking up a little louder, ignoring others' comments, and self-advocating. Rather, zine authors are challenged by how to speak up and use their stories and visual works to confront the very media processes that lead to their own stigmatization. Zines mark a disruption of dominant media production through their insertion of a speaking subject into a media-driven culture that more often represents people with mental illnesses in problematic ways than provides opportunities to hear about their actual experiences. Likewise, while the narrative between a doctor and patient may be collaborative, it is, as Couser (1997) suggested, often one-sided. Writing one's own narrative begins an important process of challenging who is deemed to be the legitimate voice for an illness and advocates for people with mental illnesses as important voices capable of raising vital issues about their own lives.

However, how is a discussion of zines about mental illness and disability culture relevant to art education and particularly ideas of multiculturalism? What can be learned from this exploration of the motivations behind zine writing, the disability arts movement, and disability culture? The pedagogical potential of zine making has been suggested already in art education (Blandy &

Congdon, 2003; Klein, 2010). Blandy and Congdon (2003) described the use of zine making in multiple university courses. They found that "creating and distributing zines is a successful pedagogical strategy for encouraging students to participate in postmodern discourse" (p. 44). They described the writing and illustration of zines as "pastiche, parody, irony, and bricolage" (p. 46). Zines, through these postmodern practices, emerged in their curriculum as a "strategy for encouraging the development and distribution of ideas and social critique through images and text" (p. 45). In addition, Klein (2010) discussed the relevance of zine making to preservice art teacher education. She wrote, "zine formats allow preserivce art teachers to examine and visualize assumptions, beliefs, and connections between theory and practice utilizing emotional, affective, aesthetic, and cognitive domains" (p. 42).

However, in addition to this pedagogical potential the intersection of zines about mental illness, the disability arts movement, and disability culture raises questions about the definition of culture itself. In 2003, Dipti Desai called on art educators to critique institutionalized understandings of culture. She argued that the exclusion of sexual diversity from multiculturalism pointed to the ways in which the conceptualization and institutionalization of a particular concept of culture made the inclusion of sexual diversity a discursive impossibility. While Desai challenged art educators to articulate "a concept of culture that best serves the complexity of diverse racial, ethnic, social class, gendered, and sexual communities in our society" (p. 147), she did not include disability in this list of diversities. Therefore, a recognition of disability culture within art education through such possibilities as the disability arts movement not only expands the concept of culture Desai articulated, but also challenges us to think about what it is about varying conceptualizations of culture that result in the exclusion of disability culture in the first place.

As this paper has described, zine writing is a critical component of the disability arts movement reflecting the movement's desire to critique dominant representations of disability and to produce alternative representations. The disability arts movement is also a part of a larger disability culture. This complex culture, the understanding of which emphasizes its hybridity as the intersection of multiple complex identities and communities, is constructed not through traditional kinship and geography, but through a common experience of living as a disabled person. Within art education their remains a tendency, that Desai clearly identified in 2003, to limit definitions and understandings of culture in ways that exclude things like sexual diversity and disability. Zine writing about mental illness represents a complex form of artistic production that challenges both disability culture to recognize mental illness as a disability, and art education to understand disability as a culture.

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# Fostering Capabilities
# Toward Social Justice in Art Education

CINDY MAGUIRE & TERRY LENIHAN

### ABSTRACT

Social justice, in its broadest sense, is about equal rights and opportunities for all. But understandings of rights and opportunities vary widely, depending upon how we are situated socially, politically, economically, and culturally. In education, social justice is not simply the absence of injustice but also the need to recognize and enact teaching and learning that promotes a deeper understanding of ourselves and our students in relation to the broader social and cultural landscape. This article argues that, given the growing diversity of our society, it is imperative for current and future teachers to find ways of embodying, implementing, and assessing social justice practices in art classrooms. The authors developed, taught, and evaluated a social justice based art education course with a service learning component for undergraduate art education students. Through their experience they discovered that the capabilities students brought to the classroom directly influenced the ways in which they engaged with and put into practice the social justice course material.

Social justice and the work of cultivating understanding, insight, and compassion—in oneself and in the world—together form an integral component of contemporary art education, as defined in this article. As former art educators in the Los Angeles City Schools, we worked with these values and experiences in our classrooms. We designed and facilitated arts experiences for our students that enabled them to explore personal identity and individual expression, which we then linked to broader contemporary social issues through the arts. The student work was exhibited in a variety of venues, including a range of school and citywide locales, galleries, and public sites. As we widened the space in which the students could identify and work with personal and social issues, we found that the broader school and local community members were interested in participating in the art making and exhibition processes. Whereas the relationships among the students, parents, teachers, and administration were at times complex (even antagonistic), the arts mediated a dialogic school culture in which differences were explored, expressed, and accepted through the making of art. Our projects became sites of collaboration and community building, processes that incorporated both individual and collective art making as well as democratic processes through the arts—exemplifying important aspects of social justice in action.

When we moved from the K–12 classroom into our respective university classrooms, we were eager to continue this work with our pre-service art education students. Here we encountered firsthand the complexities that emerge when incorporating social justice in pre-service contemporary art education programs. While many students had deep transformative experiences, we also found it challenging to create classroom spaces where all students could fully participate. For example, one young women of color, enrolled in a class that was predominantly white, was silent throughout an entire course with the exception of speaking privately to the professor. When she was encouraged to share her comments directly with the class, she told the professor that she did not feel comfortable speaking, as she felt like an outsider. This student expressed doubts regarding the significance of what she had to offer, in spite of three years of experience teaching K–12 art. In another instance, a white student expressed her feeling that the professor was imposing her own ideology upon the class—to her, teaching for social justice appeared to be a ruse for liberal indoctrination.

We both came to realize that we needed to find a better way of understanding and assessing the capabilities toward social justice our students possessed upon entering our classes, and we needed greater knowledge about which capabilities were (or were not) fostered through our course work. The goal was to create higher education classroom spaces that work toward social justice through collaboration with students who have been traditionally marginalized, as well as with those traditionally privileged thereby fostering an array of empowered voices to engage in the work of social justice. This desire led to our collaboration to develop, teach, and evaluate a social justice art education course with a service-learning component for undergraduate art education students. The class that we designed and continue to develop is the focus of this article.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SOCIAL JUSTICE?

Our research and teaching practice is embedded with two key underlying assumptions. The first assumption is that diversity within a classroom, due to race/ class/ gender/ sexuality/ citizenship/ ideological values, must be critically explored and understood within power paradigms. Without deconstructing how differences manifest amid the macro social power structure, we lack a critical understanding of the systemic functions of social injustices and we lack knowledge of what is needed to move toward a more equitable society. Our second assumption is that the ability to articulate social injustices empowers us to move toward action.

Social justice, in its broadest sense, is about equal rights and opportunities for all people in every part of society. "A central aim," according to Watts and Guessous (2006), is "exposing social injustice, creating just societies, promoting

self-determination and solidarity with others, and ending oppression (and healing its effects)" (p. 60). Social justice also calls for us "to articulate the relationship between the collective [struggle] against social ills and the advancement of personal well-being" (p. 60). But how do we know what is just? What constitutes an opportunity, and how do we balance the advancement of our personal well-being with a collective struggle against social ills? Perceptions and understandings of rights and opportunities vary widely, depending upon how the viewer is situated socially, politically, economically, and culturally. To shift the current pedagogical structure that exists in many higher education programs requires all people to recognize their position within this power structure. In the words of Audre Lorde (1984), "it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation" (p. 43). In a country of increasing diversity and with a slowly shifting power structure, it is especially critical for all those committed to social justice to examine where we fall on the power spectrum and examine the ways in which that power can manifest to undermine and/or support social justice movements. In education, social justice is not simply the absence of injustice but, rather, the need to recognize and enact teaching and learning that promote a deeper understanding of ourselves and our students in relation to the broader social and cultural landscape (Maguire, 2009).

Teaching and research inspired by principles of social justice are referenced by a variety of teaching approaches, including *social reconstructionism/critical theory* (Brameld, 1956; Freire, 1994), *culturally relevant teaching* (Ladson-Billings, 1994), *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2000), *teaching against the grain* (Cochran-Smith, 1991), *teaching for diversity* (Sadker & Sadker, 1992), and *multicultural education* (Banks, 1993; Nieto, 1999; Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Although there is a growing body of literature discussing social justice in art education (Desai & Chalmers, 2007; Freedman, 2000, 2007; Garber, 2005; Greene, 1995; Stuhr, 2003), much of the literature is directed at content for K–12 classrooms. When post-secondary settings are discussed, there is little empirical research on the impact on student consciousness development and teaching practices.[1] In fact, a meta-analysis of research on teacher education illustrates that—in spite of the teaching approaches listed above—little has actually changed in the ways teachers are prepared in college and university-based programs, despite more than two decades of efforts toward social justice in educational practices (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Resistance to social justice manifests in a variety of ways, stemming from personal ideological values and seeping into classroom dynamics. It is not unusual to

An exception is Melody Milbrandt's (2002) article "Addressing contemporary social issues in art education: A survey of public school art educators in Georgia."

find teachers and students who dismiss ideas/ individuals who are different from themselves. In some instances, these differences are negated through sameness— that is teachers and students who express an interest in and commitment to social justice will dismiss ideas/ individuals that threaten to undermine notions of collective solidarity within the classroom setting (Cervenak, Cespedes, Souza, & Straub, 2002). Given the growing diversity of our society, we believe that it is imperative for current and future teachers to find ways of embodying, implementing, and assessing social justice practices in art classrooms.

## CAPTURING THE EXPERIENCES: OUR METHODS

In 2007, using case study and action research methods, we developed, taught, and evaluated a social justice based art education course with a service-learning component for undergraduate art education students called *Art and Social Justice*. The course is designed to help pre-service teachers adopt and put into practice a critical social justice perspective for their own art making and teaching practices. For this study we wanted to know how these students' understanding of and experience in the *Art and Social Justice* course changed over one sixteen-week semester. To capture this narrative we looked at:

- Participant observations over time of five students in the course, including the service-learning component, in three K–8 schools

- Pre- and post-questionnaires to capture demographics, prior experiences in the arts and education, and views on social justice

- In-depth interviews about their current experiences as they engaged with the course, as well as future goals as artists and educators

- Ongoing dialogue between the professor and the researcher regarding initial and final narrative analyses, including a final list of capabilities we saw as integral to the work of art educators in this program

- Participants' own verbal, written, and visual stories regarding their experiences and practices in the course

In this study, images or art practices and products "operate as texts, artifacts, and events that embody cultural meanings" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 110). The student artwork was analyzed using an arts based research approach. Our task was to understand how the students "construct their meanings as they present them in visual form" in response to class assignments (p. 61). These visual, verbal, and written constructions as well as the student experiences in the service-learning component, were analyzed through a *capability* lens. That is, we considered the question of which capabilities were or were not being fostered through engagement with the different components of the course content over time. By the end of the semester we were able to surface aspects of the students'

understanding of and experience in the *Art and Social Justice* course and how this changed over the sixteen-week semester. Our primary lens for analyzing this information was taken from aspects of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's (1993) *capability approach.*

**The Capability Approach:** Our Lens. The *capability approach* was initially developed in the 1970s by economist Amartya Sen "as a more appropriate theory of justice than existing theories in moral philosophy" (Saito, 2003, p. 1). According to Walker (2005), the *capability approach* is "about freedom and the development of an environment suitable for human flourishing. Capability refers to what people are actually able to be and do, rather than [only] to what resources they have access to. It focuses on developing people's capabilities to choose a life that they have reason to value" (p. 103).

The belief that all human beings deserve the opportunity to participate and to engage in building lives of personal value and dignity is at the root of our understanding of Social Justice Art Education. Not only do we need to take into account the work our students produce (visually, verbally, and in writing), we also need to examine our students' "beings and doings" within the classroom space. That is, we need to consider how to devise a curriculum and pedagogy that take into account and engage with the skills and capabilities our students enter the classroom with, and how we can expand those capabilities as a means of fostering social justice in art education teaching and learning.

We work with Walker's (2006) list of higher education capabilities to help us understand and delineate what a criterion of justice might look like in our *Art and Social Justice* course. In this list, capabilities are understood as opportunities, skills, and capacities that can be fostered in higher education as a means of moving toward social justice. This list is not fixed but, rather, provides an initial outlining of capabilities that we and our students need to have to effectively address social justice in visual arts classrooms.

The capabilities that we seek to foster and assess in this course are drawn from Walker (2006):

1. *Practical reason.* Being able to make well-reasoned, informed, critical, independent, socially responsible, and reflective choices. Having good judgment. Being able to put ideas into action. Being able to reflect on self, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, habits, and behaviors.

2. *Educational resilience.* Able to navigate study, work, and life. Able to negotiate risk, to persevere academically, to be responsive to educational opportunities and adaptive to constraints. Self-reliant. Having aspirations and hopes for a good future.

3. *Knowledge and imagination.* Being able to gain knowledge of a discipline—its form of academic inquiry and standards. Being

able to use critical thinking and imagination to comprehend the perspectives of others and to form impartial judgments. Being able to debate complex issues. Being able to acquire knowledge for pleasure and personal development, for career and economic opportunities, for political, cultural, and social action, and participation in the world. Awareness of ethical debates and moral issues. Open-mindedness.

4. *Learning disposition.* Being able to have curiosity and a desire for learning. Having confidence in one's ability to learn. Being an active inquirer.

5. *Social relations and social networks.* Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems and tasks. Being able to work with others to form effective groups for collaborative and participatory learning. Being able to form networks of friendship and belonging for learning support and leisure. Mutual trust.

6. *Respect, dignity, and recognition.* Being able to have respect for oneself and others, being treated with dignity, not being diminished or devalued because of one's gender, social class, religion, or race, valuing other languages, other religions and spiritual practices, and human diversity. Being able to show empathy, compassion, fairness, and generosity, listening to and considering other persons' points of view in dialogue and debate. Being able to act inclusively and to respond to human need. Having competence in intercultural communication. Having a voice to participate effectively in learning; a voice to speak out, to debate, and persuade; to be able to listen.

7. *Emotional integrity and emotions.* Not being subject to anxiety or fear, which diminishes learning. Being able to develop emotions for imagination, understanding, empathy, awareness, and discernment.

8. *Bodily integrity.* Safety and freedom from all forms of physical and verbal harassment in the higher education environment. (p. 182)

We believe that if we are able to create classrooms that foster a range of capabilities, including those listed above, we are not only engaged in the work of Social Justice Art Education, we are provided with a framework for evaluating whether or not we are coming closer or moving further away from enacting social justice in our classrooms.

## THE ART AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COURSE
The course we developed and studied is taught at a small private university in the metropolitan area of Los Angeles. The students who enrolled in this course are representative of the larger university: 48% White, 24% Latina/o, 13% Asian-American, 9% African-American and predominantly female. The students at the K-8 schools, part of the service-learning component of the course, are

representative of the public schools in the larger geographic area across race: 70+% Latina/o, 10% Black, 10% Asian, 10% White. There is also similarity across class, as defined by income levels.

Though open to any student, the majority of the students enrolled were pre-service educators who will go on to be either elementary generalists or secondary art educators. Students entered the class with a wide range of prior knowledge in art concepts and processes, teaching curriculum and pedagogy, and social justice theory. They also came with various levels of resistance and openness to new ideas and challenging situations. Given this reality we wanted to put into place curricular and pedagogical conditions "that enable the highest possible level of capability for each and every student we teach, leaving it up to the students (under conditions of freedom) to choose their own level of achievement" (Walker, 2006, p. 97). That is, students were provided with opportunities to make choices in regards to how they work with the material taught in the course and a variety of approaches towards engaging with the content are provided – classroom discussions, readings, journal writing, art making, and service-learning teaching opportunities.

In this course the instructor acts as a facilitator and co-creator with students as they individually and collectively perform the role of the artist and teacher, with art operating as a site for creating "participatory spaces" (hooks, 1994) wherein students explore personal identities and cultures as well as broader social justice issues. To foster growth within this space we have designed three art projects that are undertaken by the students throughout the semester. Each project is introduced by methods such as presentations, field trips, brainstorming, hands-on activities, reflection, and discussions. Students then proceed through a process including idea development, process critiques, and written reflections. These activities are further supported through experimentation and exploration in the use of different materials. The projects are conceptually scaffolded, moving students through an individual self-reflective identity piece, a social justice printmaking piece (from political posters to installations involving printmaking), culminating in a collaborative social justice piece.



Fig. 1

My Medicine Cabinet
Mariel Moreno
mixed media, 2007

In the first project, "Making it Personal: Exploring Issues of Personal Identity," students are asked to use self-

selected materials and processes to create an original, ambitious, well-researched, well-planned, and well-constructed 3-D (which can include installation) mixed media piece that expresses their identity through the use of personal metaphors, symbols, words, and images. During the project introduction, the teacher presents a range of artists that have used their art as a medium to express their identity with a focus on contemporary art. Concurrently, students are asked to research visual artists they identify with and present these artists and their work to the class. For the second project students are asked to research, develop, and utilize a selected printmaking process to create a set of original, well-researched, planned, and hand-crafted prints that effectively



Fig. 2
When Did Your Family First Make Their Mark On This Land?
Kerry Medina
printmaking and
mixed media installation, 2008

communicate, through the use of visual metaphors, symbols, text, and images, their view(s) on a social justice issue that is relevant in their life.

In the final project the students are asked to work as a team, including their K-8 students, to design and develop a collaborative art installation addressing a social justice issue.



Fig. 3
Where Do You See Peace?, University and grade 6-8 students,
mixed media collaborative installation, 2007

The *capability approach* recognizes the importance of social relationships—it is through our relationships with people that agency and well-being can be fostered (Walker, 2006). Walker (2006) has argued that we can take this idea further, "that a just society is something that we make together, by thinking and working with others so that freedom is constructed in-between" (p. 105). The approach to art making in this course works with a similar understanding. Incorporating Kester's (2004) concept of dialogical aesthetics, we emphasize the interactive nature of art making. Through the creative facilitation of dialogue and exchange in the art making process, as well as willingness on the artist's part for "active listening and empathetic identification" meaning occurs and is developed "in the exchange between the artist and viewers, ultimately affecting the identities of both" (Garber 2005, p. 4). Opportunities for fostering capabilities—moving closer towards social justice—do not rest solely on our ability to engage in rational discourse, but also upon our ability to listen closely and empathize with those around us.

## MOVING TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE

Across this study we found three specific components of the curriculum in which students had the most empowering and transformative experiences. In the areas of guided reflection, rigorous art making, and service-learning in the K–8 settings, all five students showed evidence of a range of capability development over time. While below we separate each area as a way of defining and illustrating what surfaced in our study, we found that it was the opportunity to participate in all three areas of the curriculum, throughout the semester, that helped the students to navigate the resistance that often arises when conflicts are perceived between the advancement of personal well-being and the collective struggle to right social injustices.



Fig 2.
Students engaged in guided reflection.

**Guided Reflection.** Each student was asked to practice guided reflection through a variety of assignments and activities. These included: weekly journal prompts, reflective reading summaries, group discussions, personal artist statements, and lesson planning activities. These activities involved documenting, describing, and analyzing their art making, teaching, and learning experiences throughout the semester, as well as their lives and their professional goals. The reflective coursework was not completely predetermined but rather generated and continually refined to address the emerging needs of the students. After assessing the students' initial responses to our first prompts, for example, we saw that we needed to provide more content regarding social justice in education. Early writing by the students revealed a tendency to document and describe their experiences in the course with little to no analysis or critical reflection related to social justice issues. We began adding more assigned readings and classroom discussions on issues of social justice and art education as a way of providing the content and tools needed to go deeper into the material. We also invited guest speakers to the class as a way of adding multiple voices to address issues raised in the class.

Another initial discovery was about the importance of bringing individual experiences related to the course into the class discussions. During collaborative work assignments, for example, it became apparent that many students struggled to communicate and work together effectively. We designed reflection activities to make transparent the capabilities important to successful collaboration—working with others to solve problems and tasks, being able to comprehend other perspectives, having a voice and knowing how to listen, as well as being able to put ideas into action. Students realized that how they worked together in the course was a microcosm for ways to put these ideals into practice. As one student noted in her final teamwork reflection, "Working in a team for this particular class was essential. There ended up being a lot more components to teaching than I thought...being aware of each other and how [we] work needs to be recognized right away. Social justice and team work go hand-in-hand... there needs to be that respect, responsibility and awareness of one another."

Continually building upon the knowledge base of the arts and social justice provided opportunities for the students to make connections between the course content and their future teaching lives. As expressed by another student, "I understand that social justice is a process to learn and live by, thus I continue to remain aware of what I do as a student and teacher and role model—to remain accountable for my actions and ideals that I live and teach by."

**Rigorous Art Making.** In this course, we strive to integrate rigorous art making experiences with culturally relevant and engaging curriculum. We do this by encouraging our students to "play an active role in discovering and evaluating

information, creating cultural and social facts, and producing knowledge" through their own art making (Cervenak, et al., 2002, p. 344). Before we ask them to engage in action to right social ills, however, we find that they must first explore and critically engage with their own sociopolitical and cultural identities (Freire, 1994).

During the art making and critique processes, students and teachers are encouraged to question "all received categories and assumptions to transform their personal anecdotes into critical reflections by connecting them to the larger sociopolitical, historical, and economic contexts" explored through art making and art education (Cervenak, et al., 2002, p. 344). In our findings during the art process and critique, however, this connecting created resistance in both students and professor, often making it difficult to openly address controversial issues. During in-class critiques, for example, we found students were often not aware of stereotypes reinforced in their own visual imagery—artwork that would subsequently be used as exemplars with the K–8 students. One student created a poster expressing sympathy for an oppressed minority—Latin American immigrants— but positioned herself as separate from them; they represented the Other. This student's artwork showed us that we needed to emphasize the relationship between content and artist intention, addressing overt as well as covert stereotypical text and imagery.

The final project is a collaborative community art project that brings together social justice content as well as multiple spaces for the fostering of student capabilities. Students in the social justice art course, K–8 students in the service program, and the professor (and often a visiting artist) collaboratively design the community art project. Students use the knowledge, skills, and dispositions fostered throughout the semester, including teamwork, critical reflection, and art processes. Emphasis is placed on the capabilities of social relations and social networks, and students conceptualize, design and implement a project that is representative of all the participants as much as is possible. In our initial brainstorming and lesson planning sessions for the project, students showed



Fig. 5
Where Do You See Peace? University students brainstorming installation design with grade 6-8 students, mixed media collaborative installation, 2007.

planning abilities. However, they were less concerned with how to organize a large project given the time allotted, with the broader university and local school systems, with the issues of teamwork, and with the best ways of including the K-8 children in the design. The finished projects offered opportunities for the fostering of capabilities for all K-8 students, but a small number of the projects were teacher-directed with only minor opportunities for the K-8 students to make choices. The most successful projects engaged the K–8 students across all areas of the collaborative process, from conception to implementation. Despite these differences, the social justice art students commented on how valuable the collaborative art project was for their own education and for that of their K–8 students. As one student noted, "By allowing the students to make the decisions concerning the collaborative piece, [they] were able to feel a real ownership of the project." Based upon journal prompts, observations and interviews, we saw evidence of the impact of rigorous art making on the pre-service teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to design engaging and socially relevant curriculum in their future K-12 classrooms. As one student put it, the K–8 students "need critical thinking skills and social skills. The critical thinking skills are necessary to make better choices and the social skills to be respectful of others."

As in the community collaborative artwork discussed above, the artwork assigned to students in the social justice art course was used to inform the lessons they designed for their K–8 students in the service-learning component. We view service-learning teaching as another critical component for bridging theory with practice.

**Service-learning.** An important capability-building aspect of this course is the service-learning component, in which students work in teams of two to six to design K-8 lessons based on the projects they experience in the course. These lessons are taught for ten weekly sessions in public school classrooms. While we recognize the importance of volunteer work and political participation found in many service-learning programs, these programs tend to operate through a participatory citizen model. In working with a justice oriented citizen model, we on the other hand, are asking students to "critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 3). We provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the practice of the role of the arts in society, and the impact visual expression can have in changing the way others perceive and think about the world around them. Another finding, critical for pre-service teachers, was that the service-learning enabled the social justice art students to reevaluate their perceptions of the K–8 students and their abilities. As one student said:

This class has affected the way that I look at children most significantly. I was never so aware of how conscious children are of their surroundings . . . that these young people would be so in tune with media issues, their neighborhood, and problems that adults face . . . I was also impressed with their ability to grasp the significance of these sophisticated topics.

Just as teamwork was critical to the collaborative art making experience, it was critical for modeling social justice during service-learning. Because of the range of capabilities students entered the course with, we encountered some of our greatest challenges during the service-learning component.

Issues in service-learning first surfaced when we compared and contrasted students' written and verbal comments with their actions in the field. Some teams worked together successfully, but many struggled to find ways to manage the work together. In an early interview, one service-learning team member spoke of how important teamwork was for the health of democratic societies, as for team-building exercises as well as reflective writing and discussions on how best to design the team teaching in the service-learning component of the course, making transparent the relationship between how we treat each other in the course and broader issues of justice.

Service-learning continues to be an important component, in which students embody the social justice course work. In spite of challenges posed by the team teaching, all the students reported positive outcomes in their K–8 classroom experience. As one student said, "This course allowed me to take what I learned in the classroom and really see it in context."

## CONCLUSION

In our study we found that Social Justice Art Education programs appear to be most effective when taught through an integrated theoretical and practical framework emphasizing strategies such as directed verbal and written critical reflection, rigorous art making, and service-learning. In *Because of the Kids: Facing Racial and Cultural Differences in Schools*, Obidah and Teel (2001) found that changing teacher attitudes and understandings about race and culture is a long-term process and commitment. Since this course was for one sixteen-week semester, it is not unusual that some students did not exhibit radical change through their actions. We ourselves continue to learn and grow from teaching this course. We did discover, however, that when we used these strategies to design spaces to foster individual and collective capability development, there was a widening participation of students as self-directed and empowered agents who participated in determining their actions and future educational directions—and in turn, who provided similar opportunities and outcomes for their K–8 students.

A social justice art classroom is composed of a community of learners. Such a community works to reconcile the disparate range of class, race, and educational experiences inside and outside of school. Yet such a classroom is also "constructed out of the specific identities of its members in a process that will inevitably, promote or legitimate some aspects of these identities at the expense of others" (Kester, 2004, p. 130). The resistance of students and professors to considering and in some instances, adopting, new ideas, attitudes and/or approaches to teaching and learning must be acknowledged and worked with in order to engage in social justice. As a result of our research, we have come to believe that educators at all levels need to cultivate a deeper understanding of the prior knowledge and experiences that our students—and that we ourselves—bring into the classroom. These factors directly influence our preferences and choices in the classroom and in our lives. As white, middle-class educators, we are in a position of power that cannot be denied or wished away. By using the *capability approach* as a framework for understanding and evaluating individual student experiences as well as our own, we learn more about how to support and foster the capability development of all students, including those who might be marginalized in more traditional higher education settings. We believe that such an approach helps us capture student narratives and assess from them whether or not we, as educators, are coming closer to achieving and teaching social justice in our classrooms.

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# Art and Resistance in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia 1968-1971: The Implications of Unofficial Art for Subverting High School Art Class

Sharif Bey

ABSTRACT

As art educators strive to promote social justice we may want to invite our students to embrace examples of art and the histories of artists who have resisted the oppressive forces in their respective eras. This article examines the role Czechoslovakian artists have played, and the works they created, in opposition to Soviet occupation in the city of Bratislava in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In addition to providing a cultural, political, and historical context for interpreting these works, the author advocates for the introduction of works of art that stem from this unique set of circumstances to high school students. The article also uses the discussion of unofficial Czechoslovakian art and artists of Bratislava to examine Conceptual and Performance Art and their implications in deviating from traditional high school art teaching practices.

This study examines the role Slovak conceptual and performance artists have played in opposition to Soviet occupation in the city of Bratislava in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Before I provide a context for examining their works and discuss their merit for the high school classroom, I would like to share how and when my affinity for Slovak art was formed. During the academic years of 1994 and 1995, I was awarded an opportunity to study as an exchange student at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design (AFAD) in Bratislava, Slovakia. After a few months in Bratislava, I attended an exhibition at the Slovak National Gallery that significantly changed my impression of contemporary Slovak art. Hundreds of attendees packed the galleries at the opening reception, and I later discovered that an exhibition of unofficial Slovak art of this magnitude had never before been realized in Bratislava. These works were categorized as unofficial because their content, style, and material were neither supported nor permitted by the communist regime. Through my observation of these works I began to consider the impact of one's political context upon one's artistic production.

I researched the history of Czechoslovakia from Stalinism to the fall of the Soviet Union. From this familiarity with significant historical events, I inquired into individual artists' experiences during the regime. My Slovak professors eventually shared some of their stories of protest, struggle, and perseverance. I began to identify with shared stories of resistance and political agency as they pertained to artists and artmaking. I compared these testimonies to those

African-American artists who persevered despite the challenges they faced in a racially segregated United States during the 1960s.

As a doctoral student in art education, ten years after my first extended visit to the Slovak Republic, I was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to conduct comparative research on African-American art of the Jim Crow era and Slovak art of communist Europe. I conducted archival research both at the AFAD's library and at the Slovak National Gallery. Additionally, in 2003 and 2004, I conducted in-depth interviews with many of my former professors at the AFAD, including David Carsky, Daniel Fischer, Marian Mudroch, and Rudolf Sikora, all of whom were students at the AFAD during the Soviet regime. Through these interviews I discovered that many of my Slovak professors were involved in an underground network of artists known as the "Open Studio." Because of the clandestine nature of their meetings and the subversive content of the resulting artworks, little evidence exists to support that these proceedings ever took place. With the exception of the testimonies I collected, the only known record of these events is the published manuscript of Marian Mudroch entitled *The First Open Studio: The Coming of a New Generation.* Professor Mudroch was kind enough to give me a copy of his book along with a few digital reproductions of old slides from November 19, 1970.

Social interactions where authority and power is questioned or challenged (such as in the events of the Open Studio) typically have political implications. Writing the history of such events is often political as well. Given that several members of the Open Studio came to take the helm of art departments at the AFAD after the fall of the Soviet Union, this history serves to champion a new Slovak artistic vanguard. As historical revisionists often do, when the political climate changed, Mudroch (1994) compiled a history which Slovakia would have never embraced under the previous political conditions. This history could also serve to perpetuate a specific image (a perceived solidarity) of the community of Slovak artists in order to distinguish it from that of its (post 1989) Czech counterpart. Verdery (1999) has noted that national identity is in part, "the individual's sense of self as national, and the identity of the collective whole in relation to others of like kind" (p. 229). In some cases, historians embellish or reorient data into a framework that is most effective in advancing their particular interpretation or theoretical bias. As power changes hands, histories that were previously marginalized become "heroic tales of perseverance." So what was the value of these events in their own time? At the very least, the testimonies and images I collected along with Mudroch's manuscript do support that the Open Studio featured unofficial Czechoslovakian art and provided unique experiences for some of Bratislava's residents during a time when the individual expression

of visual artists was suppressed. The extent to which these events countered the suppression these artists endured under the Soviet Regime is questionable.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Despite the growing popularity of contemporary arts resources like the PBS video series Art:21 and educators who design curricula which focuses on works from various cultural and political perspectives, there are still many art histories to be re-discovered (Bolin, Blandy, & Congdon, 2000; Hardy, 2006; Harper, 1998; Lippard, 1990). According to Gaudelius and Speirs (2002), "[s]ocial, political, and cultural issues have become subjects to address in the teaching of art because they create contexts within which we can teach art, interpret art, and make art" (p. 4).

The actions and works produced by Soviet artists during the Cold War emerged out of a unique set of social, cultural, and political circumstances. However, in order to understand these works, it is critical for students to examine their intended purpose, and the conditions these artists endured in creating them (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002). Utilizing these works as teaching tools may expand our students' world-views and their perspectives on the purpose of the visual arts. This history will hopefully create empathy for the conditions and challenges Czechoslovakian artists faced as they sought platforms from which they could exhibit their work, and opportunities to share and exchange ideas.

Progressive art educators occasionally introduce contemporary artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, Damien Hirst, Rene Cox, Chris Ofili or Sarah Lucas (Becker, 1994; Barrett, 1990; Dubin, 1992; Hardy, 2006) into classroom discussions focusing on censorship in the arts, government-funded exhibitions, and freedom of expression. While this is encouraging, it could be equally advantageous for high school art teachers to share the efforts of artists from other political arenas or geographical locations, artists who endured even more severe forms of persecution in their attempts to express and exhibit their works (Ludwig, 2008).

Due to the coerced isolation of artists and art educators in the former Soviet Bloc, the implications of their efforts have attracted little attention from the international academic community or art education practitioners (Garoian, 1994). During the Cold War some of these artists smuggled their works out of the country with hopes that they might make a contribution to the broader international discourse. Other works did not take material form at all, existing primarily as performance and conceptual works (Bartosova, 2008; Mudroch, 1994). Artists whose work was not sanctioned by the Soviet regime partook in a culture of secrecy. Even those museum and center directors who were at the helm of institutions designed to "support art and culture" were compelled

to neglect the documentation of their programmatic efforts in order to sustain their cultural identities (Garoian, 1994). Although it is significant to preserve or reconstruct these stories and events, it is also important to note the significance or metanarrative implied by the ways in which these artists worked.

## PERFORMANCE AND DEMATERIALIZATION

So what were the benefits for Czechoslovakian artists who created works using 'unconventional' and/or subversive modes of expression? And how did the endeavors of performance and conceptual artists in the West compare to those of the former Czechoslovakia? In the West, contemporary artists of the 1960s and 1970s began to challenge conventional notions audiences had about the visual arts and venues at which they were displayed. The performance art that emerged during this period shared affinities with several experimental genres of the early and mid-20th century (Garoian, 1999; Lippard, 1973; Morgan, 1996). Conceptual art came to prominence in the late 1960s and early 1970s as these artists vehemently challenged "the principles of traditional aesthetics as embedded in Greenbergian Modernism, where art functions in relation to the identity of a particular medium" (Morgan, 1996, p. 16). Conceptual artists established the notion that "art is capable of functioning as a language" (Morgan, 1996, p. 16) and that images, objects, process, or medium can function symbolically (De Salvo, 2005; Lippard, 1973). In some cases, the absence or omission of images or objects functions significantly in the work (Morgan, 1996). In addition to exploring concepts through the absence or dematerialization of the art object, conceptual artists of the 1960s and 1970s had alternative reasons for rejecting the object. Siegelaub describes a growing cynicism in the West:

> there was an attitude of general distrust toward the object, seen as a necessary finalization of the art-work, and consequently towards its physical existence and market value. There was also the underlying desire and attempt to avoid commercialization of artistic production, a resistance nourished, for the most part, by the historical context: the Vietnam war and subsequent questionings of the American way of life.
> (quoted in Morgan, 1996, p. 21)

While Western conceptual artists rejected conventional uses of the object as a philosophical and political stance against existing power structures in our society including the "art world," Czechoslovakian artists embraced this mode/ method for a variety of reasons.

## DIVERGING AGENDAS: SOCIALISTS REALISM, SOCIAL REALISM, AND ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

Unofficial Czechoslovakian artists rejected "Socialist Realism" which supported the Soviet regimes' political agenda, and criticized Western capitalism. These artists looked to the West and embraced styles and methods which challenged that which was officially sanctioned by the regime. In the United States artists were influenced by other political factors. As government officials in the United States recognized the visual arts as a mode of international communication, they hoped it would serve to promote anti-communists ideologies (Mathews, 1976). They opposed the social commentary in representational art and regarded some of the American "Social Realists" of the 1930s as domestically subversive. After the Second World War, Paris had all but lost its esteem as the perceived cultural center of the Western world. Influential art critic Clement Greenberg championed American painters such as Jackson Pollock, as the leaders of the new cultural center, New York City. While the remainder of the West was recovering from WWII, the United States was prospering and began to establish itself as a cultural, economic, and military force (Guilbaut, 1985).

Painters in the United States including: Williem de Kooning, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko subscribed to a new aesthetic which no longer represented the voices and views of the American people. Instead it represented a formal superiority and was supported by the elite and wealthy (Matthew, 1976). With the huge success of Abstract Expressionist painters like Jackson Pollock, many painters who created representational works of social relevance in the 1930s shifted to nonrepresentational abstract painting (Guilbaut, 1985). However the racial climate of the 1960s compelled many African-American artists to continue to employ or shift to figurative representations in order to extend a socially and politically relevant message to their communities (Fine, 1971). Unofficial Czechoslovakian artists in the late 1960s also felt compelled to respond to their political climate. However they faced additional hurdles.

## THE PRAGUE SPRING

Relative to the political climate of other Soviet-ruled nations, Czechoslovakia was seemingly open to the possibility of democratic change in the beginning of 1968. Reform proposals during the "Prague Spring" promoted an environment of hope and promise. According to Gawdiak (1989), "The movement to democratize socialism in Czechoslovakia, formerly confined largely to the party intelligentsia, acquired a new, popular dynamism...The program proposed a 'new model of socialism,' 'profoundly democratic' and 'national,' that is, adapted to Czechoslovak conditions" (p. 62). Although freedom of assembly and expression

were proposed as constitutional laws, this reform movement would nevertheless maintain a commitment to communist goals (Gawdiak, 1989).

In this short period, Czechoslovakian artists experienced unprecedented freedoms and also shared a sense of exceptional enthusiasm (D. Fischer, personal communication, October 26, 2003). They attended international symposia while galleries and museums were beginning to support artistic styles that were previously forbidden under Stalinism. The availability of Western magazines and journals also provided a window to the Western art world. Publications such as *Art in America* and *Art News* were made readily available through the Academy of Fine Art and Design in Bratislava and the Slovak National Gallery's library collections (R. Sikora, personal communication, January 26, 2004). Czechoslovakian artists gained international exposure and experienced freedoms like never before. Rusnakova (2000) wrote:

> Information flows sped up, and possibilities to travel, make contacts, and take part in international exhibitions opened up. The artists crossed boundaries of traditional types of art. They created assemblages, objects, environments and concepts. They switched to 'Happenings' and 'Action Art' in which aesthetic aspects gave way to social ones. The trends that originated in 'Duchamp's' family established themselves fairly quickly (Neo-Dada, Pop Art, New Realism and Conceptual Art). Time, space and a change in the viewer's position from that of spectator to that of participant played an important role in the perception of artwork. (p. 214)

According to Rusnakova, by the second half of the 1960s, Czechoslovakian art had "caught up with what it had missed" in previous decades and had "set a course toward a change of a paradigm" (p. 217). On August 21, 1968, the intervention of Soviet and Warsaw Pact troops marked the end of democratic change in Czechoslovakia. For the next 20 years, the country would be under the authority of a foreign power. Ultimately, these events had a profound impact on the cultural and political presence of visual artists in Czechoslovakia.

## OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL ARTISTS

Despite the military success of the troops, the cultural impact of this imposition was not immediately apparent. In 1969, the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava hosted an exhibition of American art entitled "American Painting after 1945." The exhibition featured influential American painters including Frank Stella, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol (D. Fischer, personal communication, October 26, 2003). As of June of 1970 it was still possible for unofficial artists to display their works on Spa Island in Piestany, where the vanguard of young artists held exhibitions (Rusnakova, 2000). It took a couple of years before the communist regime began to more

proactively censor education, art, and culture. Of course this censorship largely impacted the content and style of the visual arts produced in Czechoslovakia. A program referred to as "normalization"—the restoration of continuity with the pre-reform policies—was initiated. "Normalization" had dramatic effects on the production of visual artists. "Official Art" or "State Art," which was defined and regulated during Stalinism, was reinstituted. Lorand Hegyi (2000) expands on the parameters set forth by the doctrines of Official Art:

> They upheld the tradition of Realism and Naturalism…Art was interpreted as an instrument of class conflict; current political issues and moral, educational aspects determined the imagery of "Socialist Realism." A Communist iconography was adopted as a model, but the contradictions between the two poles of a prescribed Realism— the presentation of truth- and idealization-serving as a tool of moral education…(p. 60)

The visual arts had to adhere to rigid Socialist Realist standards. "Official artists," who produced Socialist Realist works, were supported by the system through prestigious public commissions, teaching appointments at the academies and universities, and major museum and gallery exhibitions (Mudroch & Toth, 1994; Solomon, 1991; Ludwig, 1998).

Those who produced works outside of that which perpetuated communist ideology were scrutinized, persecuted, and often threatened (D. Fischer, personal communication, October 26, 2003). These so-called "unofficial artists," subscribed to freedom of expression or personal religious subjects, but were forbidden to produce such works much less teach or exhibit independently without the Czechoslovakian government's support. Unofficial artists were constantly under the scrutiny of the Ministry of Culture as well as the secret police; they could not travel outside the country or hold teaching positions in higher education (D. Fischer, personal communication, October 26, 2003). Rusnakova (2000) described how these artists "concerned with new tendencies found themselves pushed away from the scene and had to create under tougher financial and material conditions, in insufficient space, within the alternative culture scene" (p. 217). Some unofficial artists found substitute ways to sustain their incomes while avoiding the pressures of the regime. They illustrated children's books, worked as puppeteers and interior designers, and taught visual arts classes to young children (Mudroch & Toth, 1994; R. Sikora, personal communication, January 26, 2004).

It was not long before underground networks were formed to promote a platform for free-expression for artists and intellectuals. Select Czechoslovakians met in secrecy on a weekly basis to exchange ideas, share information, and to exhibit, and perform. They also discussed issues of identity, politics, art, and culture as it pertained to life beyond the borders of Czechoslovakia and explored

ways to use their collective creative energies to promote social and political awareness. In 1970, Rudolf Sikora, a young Czechoslovakian artist and recent graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava, opened his home and courtyard as a common meeting place for underground events. His residence became known to an elite group of poets, musicians, and visual artists as the Open Studio. For the next 19 years, people assembled weekly at Sikora's home to share ideas, to perform, and to exhibit (R. Sikora, personal communication, January 26, 2004). Despite the restrictive circumstances in which they lived, they struggled to survive as professional artists and never compromised their ideologies.

## THE FIRST OPEN STUDIO

November 19, 1970 marked the evening of the "First Open Studio." It was the first deliberate protest against interventions of power on the visual arts in Bratislava. Some 400 people attended this social event, which focused on art and activism that literally and metaphorically addressed the cultural and political condition of Czechoslovakia. Sikora invited 19 artists who created land, action, pop, installation, performance, and conceptual art. The works produced by this generation of Czechoslovakian artists shaped the face of unofficial art for years to come. They developed styles of playfulness, sensitivity to the civil and unorthodox forms and functions of the picture, and a willingness to enter into polemic and confrontation and to take collective risks as collaborators (Mudroch & Toth, 1994).

Although the secret police often suspected that these artists were involved in subversive activities and subjected them to interrogations and threats, there was rarely any physical evidence that these events took place. Many of the works exhibited in this venue left no material trace. One of the major participants in the First Open Studio, Marian Mudroch, who is now a professor in the foundations program at the AFAD, created several collaborative conceptual works. Mudroch created a poignant ceremonial work entitled *Focus Your Attention on the House's Chimneys: By Its Intervention in Civil Atmosphere of a City District Using Colored Smoke*, to kick off the evening's events. During this opening event, Mudroch simultaneously stoked the two chimneys of Sikora's house with colored smoke-producing materials. One chimney yielded red smoke while the other smoked blue. While attendees stood outside and watched, the two colored puffs of smoke took to the sky, serving as a metaphor for recreating an atmosphere for 1970 that was more conducive to creativity and the freeing of social constraints. It was no coincidence that Mudroch used the colors of the Czechoslovakian flag to make his statement about restrictive forces on creative expression (Mudroch & Toth, 1994).

Along with Viliam Jakubik and Julius Koller, Mudroch created additional works which spoke to the cultural and political atmosphere of Czechoslovakia. In a work whose title loosely translates to *Atmosphere of 1970: Unbreathable*, nearly every attendee was given a small can upon arrival, approximately the size of a can of tuna, which read in red, white and blue paint, "Atmosphere of 1970: Unbreathable." Again, this work serves as a metaphor for the restrictive climate of this period. The can could be interpreted as an emergency ration of free oxygen in the event that the conditions of Czechoslovakia became even more unbearable. On a more playful note, the three artists staged a performance called *Czechoslovakia*. Fourteen small cardboard boxes roughly the size of children's blocks, each of which possessed one of the fourteen letters to spell out the name "Czechoslovakia," were placed side by side. After arranging the boxes in an orderly fashion, Jakubik, Koller, and Mudroch then opened each box and took out a small mechanical wind-up toy frog. Each frog was then wound to bounce about hence dismantling the original order of the letters. This playful and direct message was well received (Mudroch & Toth, 1994).

Mudroch was also involved in the production of two additional performances, which commemorated American artists Jackson Pollock and Roy Lichtenstein. *Homage to Lichtenstein* was an indoor performance, which included a beautiful blonde model dressed as the women depicted in Lichtenstein's famous cartoon-like paintings, performing behind a giant polka dot shower curtain which represented the quintessential stippling one also finds in Lichenstein's paintings.



Fig. 1&2
Homage to Lichenstein, by Vladimír Kordiš, Marián Mudroch and Viliam Jakubík, 1971

Although she did not speak English, she did exclaim dramatic quotes through her performance that evoked ideas about action and suspense. She also blew soap bubbles, which signified the speech bubbles conventionally used in comic strips and in Lichtenstein's paintings (Mudroch & Toth, 1994).

As was common in other works by Jakubik, Koller, and Mudroch, *Homage to Jackson Pollock* required the participation of the audience. The artists turned over a plot of land in Sikora's yard and neatly leveled it. In a grid-like fashion, rows of two-inch wide holes were spread across the plot at about one-half inch apart. In front of the plot were four different containers, each containing a different color of paint. The initial participants were directed to use a ladle to distribute the paint throughout the composition on the ground. Although it is doubtful that Pollock used a ladle to execute his paintings, participants were encouraged to do so, and expected to stand over the composition as they painted. Because this work was created in the soil it would have been easier to destroy it after the event. These works served to symbolically invite Western artists (i.e. their names, and components of their signature styles) to join with those of the Slovak underground through unique and memorable experiences (Mudroch & Toth, 1994).

While much of the public is still unaware of the history of the Open Studio, the passion with which the participants shared their testimonies indicates that these experiences are permanently etched on their memories. Although I found no evidence to support that the events of the Open Studio had a significant impact on the construction of national identity of Slovak people in general, it did provide a release for an otherwise frustrated and suppressed group of Bratislavas' residents. Scott (1990) asserted that many suppressed groups create cultures outside of oppression whereby they collectively critique domination. These insubordinations register in the memory of the participants and subtly fuel revolutionary vigor. Through these critiques or "off-stage dissents" temporary moments filled with satisfaction, elation, and hope occur (Scott, 1990, p. xi). While the secret police and Ministry of Culture often interrogated, warned, and threatened alleged participants of the Open Studio, it is possible that the Soviet Regime anticipated and tolerated some subversions during the 1970s and 80s. As it compared to physical political uprisings and possible violent protests, were these forms of resistance considered to be less of a potential threat to the national Czechoslovakian identity the regime hoped to maintain? Whether they were permitted or not, these events provided a generation of creative young people with a platform that would not have been tolerated during Stalinism (R. Sikora, personal communication, January 26, 2004). In addition, these collaborations and performances do have implications for the high school art class.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL ART EDUCATION

Dipti Desai (2002) suggested that during collaboration "artists create a forum for people to assist them in understanding their community's experiences and use that exchange to naturally guide the direction of the project" (p. 317). Certainly the Open Studio collaborations and performances generated a discourse, which was not typically welcomed in this political climate. Viewing these artists in the context of a high school classroom could urge art teachers to "move beyond the consideration of the physicality of the art object *per se* to a contextualized understanding of the object in terms of the social, political, economic, and cultural condition of production and appreciation" (Desai, 2002, p. 318).

A discussion of unofficial Slovak artists in the high school classroom offers to bring to light the contributions of conceptual and performance artists who employ art as a form of investigation both in the United States and abroad. Along with raising questions equally important for students of the visual arts such as "What shall we make?" or "How shall we compose it?", new questions become relevant, which use the visual arts not as a means to an end but as a mode of investigation. In lieu of producing objects and images, Morgan (1996) stated: "[Conceptual] artists made it clear that art was primarily a form of investigation" (p. 2). While conceptual art served to challenge the modernist paradigm and possibly gave way to the postmodern discourse, formalism continued to dominate the direction of K-12 art education for years to come (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Stankiewicz, 2001). Perhaps discussing artists of the Open Studio could serve as a point of departure for new assignments, challenges and questions such as: How can we use conceptual or performance art as a means of challenging our cultural or political climate or revisiting our personal or collective histories?

For the past 35 years, performance artist and educator Charles Garoian (1999) has explored the possibilities of performance through his art, teaching, and research. As a high school art teacher, he and his students have worked collaboratively in exploring complex issues through performances. In 1977, Garoian collaborated with several high school students in a performance entitled *Dialogue with an object of conversation*. Garoian (1999) wrote:

> my students gagged, hog-tied, and dragged my body before a white
> package tied with a string, placed on the floor, and illuminated by
> a mechanic's "trouble light". Once I was situated with my head
> adjacent to the package, a student carefully untied its string, opened
> its wrapping to expose a large cow's tongue purchased from the local
> butcher. With my ability for speech and movement impeded, I began
> to twist and turn my body, to attempt freedom, to move toward the
> severed tongue. I repeated these actions while waxing philosophic
> about the paradox of art, its ability to liberate and obviate expression
> simultaneously. However, with, my "tongue tied" and gagged, my

commentary consisted of loud nonsense sounds and mumbles that were ironically juxtaposed with the severed tongue on the floor. (p. 7)

The research which emerged from this performance enabled Garoian (1999) to construct lessons through which he and his students could "explore the paradox of language use, to expose and critique its hidden dimensions" (p. 8). By comparison to those high school art teachers who hold steadfastly to the elements and principles and the use of conventional art making materials, surely Garoian offered a transformative experience (Garoian, 1999).

Since those works created by unofficial artists in Czechoslovakia were not typically staged or exhibited in museums, centers, or schools, the Open Studio provided an opportunity for participants to engage in new modes of inquiry, which were also gaining increasing popularity in the West (Lippard, 1973; Morgan, 1996). Just as the often studied Impressionist painters had a shared method for creating works, so too did the Open Studio artists As much as anything, these works served to "interrupt the flow of normative social experience" (Harper, 1998, p. vii). Harper (1998) suggests that unofficial artists "are more likely to see the social impact of their work as an intervention into the network of normal social relations or a provocation to normative values" (p. vii).

During the civil rights movements, African-American activists took advantage of platforms to challenge the status quo. They staged sit-ins and protests, and attended speeches and marches that imprinted voices of protest and images of Black power in the public memory, in spite of their portrayals in the mainstream media. African-American artists also created images of protest. These actions and works were an overt intervention to the normative social experience of racial oppression in the United States. Freedom fighter and activist Assata Shakur (1987) stated:

The less you think about your oppression, the more your tolerance for it grows. After a while, people just think oppression is the normal state of things. But to become free you have to be acutely aware of being a slave. (p. 188)

In certain social, political, and educational contexts we can arrive at these realizations and combat oppression and conformity collectively. As it pertains to how events shape collective memory, Pennebaker, Paez, and Rime (1997) have noted that "Virtually all events, experiences, and perceptions were shaped by individual's interactions with others" (p. 4).

As we instill the responsibilities of global citizenship in our students, there are a variety of efforts we can make to acknowledge the historical injustices and atrocities of the world. Such atrocities include African Slavery, The Jewish Holocaust, Apartheid, the bombing of Hiroshima, genocide in Rwanda, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, as well as current oppressive circumstances

and conditions. Teachers and students can utilize performance as a vehicle for impressing new metaphors on the public memory of our youth (Sturken, 1999). Just as the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s resulted in public protests and critical discourse on the plight of the African-American in the U.S., venues such as the Open Studio gave way to unique opportunities for artists to etch their metaphorical acts of protest in the collective memory of Slovaks who were not aligned with the Communist Party. Pennebaker, Paez, and Rime (1997) advocate that memories are more likely to be recalled if they are unique and provoke emotional reactions, therefore, unique performances and conceptual works are more likely to resonate. Because the creative language with which the Open Studio artists explored and shared was not a familiar one for many of the attendees, these experiences were especially memorable (Pennebaker, Paez, & Rime, 1997). The unfamiliarity and the compelled psychological adaptation forced attendees to challenge the normative Slovak experience. According to Garoian (1999):

> Historically and theoretically, the political challenge of performance art has enabled artists to question the assumption of traditional art and culture with respect to contemporary issues that are often considered "subversive," "controversial," or "difficult"…It is this critical-thinking dimension of performance art—the desire to experience, question, and respond to contemporary culture and to create culture anew from interdisciplinary and intercultural perspectives—that is significant to a pedagogy of postmodern art education. (p. 19)

High school students can also explore the potential impact of these modes on collective memory, hence creating a new cultural experience in the classroom. Just as art students are required to familiarize themselves with the materials and tools of inquiry for creating under the previous (predominantly Modernist) paradigm, we can allow our students to use those materials and postmodern concepts associated with contemporary art in order to subvert formal instructional platforms and to create their own (Gude, 2004; Hardy, 2006). In the following paragraph I discuss how classroom teachers might utilize postmodern concepts to explore a familiar seasonal school topic; The Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

The legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. is a topic that is visited annually in many public schools. Every January, elementary school hallways are lined with essays and drawings of King at the podium, and high schools air his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on the P.A system. Yet my experiences in the schools indicate that the collective memory of King perpetuates the idea that he was a man with a dream who was incidentally assassinated. Some children have even asserted that King was killed for having a dream. What role does King's legacy play in public memory and incidentally in shaping national identity? Do impressions of King somehow better serve the social/political agenda of the United States than would

the legacy of Civil Rights martyr and radical Muslim leader, Malcolm X? A less static performative approach to addressing these legacies might evoke creative interpretations, queries, and more resonating images and experiences. Students can then negotiate the relationship between their personal and collective memories of King. What might a performance exploring King's or Malcolm X's legacies offer to public memory beyond that which traditional school curriculum already have? Learning through performance could potentially challenge the intended impact of King's legacy on public memory and will certainly challenge the traditional role the art class plays in shaping school culture.

Contemporary artists like Charles Garoian, James Luna, and Guillermo Gomez-Pena use performance art to explore a diversity of themes such as pedagogy, language, globalization, colonization, memory and history. The works of these artists could also serve as a point of departure for meaningful investigations. When properly facilitated, even the most fundamental explorations of performance can open up spaces for critical dialogue and reflection that can lead to envisioning social change or other ways of being. Students could revisit issues and re-chart historical events in a way that theater or conventional visual arts education may not allow (Garoian, 1999).

Rather than subscribing to existing historical paradigms that one might pursue through essay writing, School Theater, or documenting historical events and social issues through painting or drawing assignments, students can explore the body as a metaphor and the signification of various objects in its proximity. How might a unique performance or conceptual piece compare to a traditional school play? What impact could this mode have on public memory? Works from the First Open Studio were transformative not because they instilled overt revolutionary vigor in the participants but because they facilitated a critical space where people could create and engage in experiences which deviated from their daily conformity. Perhaps our own students can benefit from a deviation of the conventions of art class, as did Garoian's students. Not only did the events of the First Open Studio serve to subvert the Soviet Regime, but they also subverted the limitations and restrictions that the regime placed on visual arts practices. Art classrooms can also provide liminal experiences wherein participants might experiment with the experience of transformation and subversion itself—playfully, symbolically and metaphysically—which is just another of the languages of contemporary art.

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# Understanding Adolescents' Identity Formation Through Arts-Based Research: Transforming an Ethnographic Script into a Play

MARY STOKROCKI WITH KARLA PRIMOSCH

ABSTRACT

As art educators strive to promote social justice we may want to invite our students to embrace examples of art and the histories of artists who have resisted the oppressive forces in their respective eras This article examines the role Czechoslovakian artists have played, and the works they created, in opposition to Soviet occupation in the city of Bratislava in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In addition to providing a cultural, political, and historical context for interpreting these works, the author advocates for the introduction of works of art that stem from this unique set of circumstances to high school students. The article also uses the discussion of unofficial Czechoslovakian art and artists of Bratislava to examine Conceptual and Performance Art and their implications in deviating from traditional high school art teaching practices.

## PROLOGUE

People are *homo performans*, beings that perform according to social standards (Turner, 1982). He advocated that written ethnographic notes be transformed into performance script so that students can come to an experience-based understanding of the findings of ethnographic research. In this way, they can find a way to perhaps "walk-in-the-shoes" of research participants, rather than merely role-play. Role-playing is an enjoyable activity or spontaneous amusement; play-acting is pretending to be a certain identity or portraying a character in a script; thus play-acting as performing is serious play or meaning-making (Mayer, 1986).[1]

Play can be a way of relieving tension by way of "fooling around." Preadolescents naturally play when they are among peers. Bettelheim (1976) speculated, "Some unconscious pressures in children can be worked out through play" (p. 55), and play relieves stress from adolescence crises. The concept of play itself can become deep and rich when it contains uncertainty, illusion, fantasy, and when it includes role exploring or risk-taking, thereby developing its own life (Ackerman, 1999, p. 288). One can play and the result can be a theatrical play (Hicks, 2005). Play, then, is a kind of performance, which can be classified in different ways: *natural*, involving a staged reading of a recorded conversation;

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[1] James Surls further points out that serious play includes "children pretending, playacting and loving what they do ...They are totally engrossed in the business of 'self'" (Mayer, 1986).

*dramatic* based on previous texts, *improvised* with an evolving structure, and *critical* which transforms into cultural critique and involves different types of audiences (Denzin, 1997, p. 97-101). In this study I am using the concept of play in its performance, constructive improvisational, symbolic, and social senses.

Art educators have reported on the effects of using performance (i.e. types of theater) in the classroom and in their research. Garoian (1999) challenged art educators to use critical performance, which he insists is a separate art form, as a radical teaching/research approach to explore society's complexities and contradictions. Garoian and Guadelius (2004), and Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) incorporated the work of Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco for motivating students to create critical performance. Another example, that incorporated feminist critique, explored "the beauty myth" in a non-hierarchical way utilizing a play format (Berberich, 1993). After encouraging performance work, James (2004) constructed a narrative portrait of the development of one general education student's creative thinking using photomontage and masked performance. In contrast to these previous studies, my goal was to encourage my university students to reinterpret play scripts and to consider performance arts-based research forms.[2]

This ethnographic study, which evolved from transcriptions of everyday conversations into a *natural performance* (Stuckey, 1993), is a kind of arts-based research upon which Zander (2007) has commented. She noted, "When we ask students to tell their stories [or write a play] about the art they make, or help them find meaning in the aesthetics of their own lives, we change the nature of classroom talk" (p. 200) and instruction. Using Barone and Eisner's (1997, p. 74-76) framework of arts-based features, I conclude that my ethnographic play as performance is:

- a virtual reality creation that pulls the audience into the story with its verisimilitude

- a portrayal of student qualities that is full of ambiguous meanings

- an imaginative use of making connections

- multi-interpretive in nature and expressive in metaphoric language

- in vernacular (student jargon) rather than theoretical language

- empathetic, in that the research desires to participate in students' lives and to understand them

- personally vocal and consolidates my ten years experience as a middle school teacher with several related research studies

2   Although these scripts are not of a critical nature, they provide scenarios on which students can reflect.

- aesthetic in its form, using dramatic tension, thickening plot, and resolution (denouement) to portray character change with no final answer

- recreative by inviting audience participation to deepen human understanding

## ETHNOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE METHOD

The original methodology of this study was ethnographic, and involved data collection, content analysis, and comparative analysis. Ethnography is a systematic process of describing, analyzing, and interpreting insights discovered in everyday life (Wolcott, 1994). As both process and product, it forms a picture of a group's *(ethnos)* way of life. Since observations were of one class for a semester, the study was a micro-ethnography, an inquiry into a slice of life, based on experience and knowledge of prior research (Stokrocki, 1997a). The result functions as a text or "context for other voices to be heard" (Denzin, 1997, p. 45).

McCall (2003) offered methodological steps that I rearranged according to how my performance evolved: 1) take field notes and order them to form the plot; 2) include an introduction, literature review, and conclusion; 3) add analytic points and commentary; 4) write a script, add movements, props, and choose performers; 5) keep costumes minimal and cast performers in multiple roles so that the audience is freed from a historical position (i.e. from stereotyping a character); and 6) allow the audience to identify with the actors' power to transform themselves and their world (p. 130-131).

This arts-based piece originated as an ethnographic case study of one class, consisting of 28-hours of observations, three hour-long interviews with six students, and multiple document reviews. This case study was part of a major research grant that spanned four years of ethnographic research which involved data gathering, content analysis, cross-site analysis, and interpretation (Hafeli, Stokrocki, & Zimmerman, 2005). The purpose of the original research was to develop a framework for future study about middle school art teachers' impact on student learning and to determine students' differences and similarities. Results revealed negotiation of ideas, and processes, and information about preadolescent social culture.

## EVOLUTION OF THE PERFORMANCE

I turned my field notes into a script by basing characters' lines on actual dialogue that I recorded; yet I made the school and student characters anonymous. Previously using the play format in my dissertation (Stokrocki, 1982). I learned some additional points from Ely, Vinz, Downing, and Anzul (1997) who suggested presenting summaries of the acts as analytical asides. I

then took a risk and first presented the research and results to my graduate class, "Visual Culture Research," by asking them to assume the various students' parts and to enhance them. I was pleasantly surprised as they read their selected parts with zeal and changed the wording slightly to reveal their own emotions in teaching students. I asked them if they would consider reading the parts at our art education state conference this fall. Some students couldn't wait to perform and others complained that they were not actors.[3] Additionally, I asked my graduate students, all veteran art teachers, to reflect on their experiences teaching youths, and then add comments to the script to make it simpler and clearer with added character punch (McCall, 2003). Veteran art teachers understand their students' psychological habits all too well. Casting was not a selection process, as these art teachers volunteered to read the selection and reinterpret the motions the script suggests.

## PLAY INTRODUCTION

The selected class unit, based on the theme of transformation, was an example of how eighth graders interpret their identities in a lesson titled "Self-Portrait Transformation." The purpose behind the transformation unit was to have students choose what aspects of their personalities/ identities that they would reveal through expressive self-portraits. Students created a mixed-media self-portrait using a photograph. This study explored their changing identity during the class and the following years.

*Identity* is a person's set of characteristics that s/he recognizes as unique to her/his personality. Harter (1990) explained that descriptions of one's self change from using concrete terms to more abstract characterizations, and from physical descriptions to psychological ones (Linde, 1993, p. 3). A person's identity however is multifaceted and transforming; parts are hidden, determined by culture, and are never final (Kroger, 1996). jagodzinski (2004) reports that media immersion offers brief transcendence from these youths' preoccupation with their own real life problems, and ways of role-playing solutions.

The ancient function of the art of transformation originates with the shaman-teacher, who evoked different natural and animal spirits for protection and strength. A youth would encounter an animal as a child that would become his/her special identity totem. Preadolescents struggle to find their identity through a variety of ways, some good and some bad. Art can help them find and transform their identity and seek powers beyond only that of beauty. London (1992) argued for a view of *art as transformation*. He used the idea of a mask not as an exotic item but for its original purpose, that of personal transformation. He

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3  To calm these performers' fears, I suggested that they hold up drawings as masks and read the script. Later I enlarged and laminated the drawings and performers wore them around their necks. These props were cumbersome.

asked that readers create one mask of what they desire to become and one that represents their identity traits.

So what identities do eighth graders exhibit? To help my graduate students explore this question I altered my ethnographic study into a play. The graduate students each took one character to portray. As they read the play, using props and expressive gestures, my students connected to their own experiences as art educators to make the characters come alive. At the end of each scene, a narrator provides some interpretation and analysis. This "excerpt commentary unit" involves an analytic point, orientating information, reflections from the field notes, and additional analytic commentary (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 182-183). The play ends with a reconstructed vignette that consolidates the essence of each student's identity, so that we can "think more deeply; to move from one scene to a larger drama" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 69). After a reading of the play, the performers and the audience discussed what they learned about art education for adolescents, and the implications the play carried about mainstream American society.

## PLAY SETTING

Outside of Phoenix, Arizona, the small middle school, "ARS"[4] is located on a spacious campus with natural desert landscaping. The play concentrates on an eighth-grade art class, an elective subject; students can choose two-dimensional and/or three-dimensional design. Each class meets one hour every day for 18 weeks, and the observed class met the last period of the day.

## CHARACTERS

Observed art teacher Karla Primosch explains her background, "I received both my Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis on drawing and my Master of Arts degrees in Art Education from Arizona State University. I have been teaching at ARS for five years. My teaching philosophy is student–oriented. I want kids to feel successful and challenged at the same time. When we start a lesson, I am more of a facilitator. After that, I work with individuals and small groups. I try to accommodate students' different abilities and exceptionalities. My gifted students are challenged to 'go beyond the problem.' The biggest problem is their attention deficit-struggle to complete a project or choose another alternative. For these kids, art is where they excel. I found that this research collaboration with Doc has helped me become more reflective, and I think this experience will help prepare me for National Board Certification."

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4    ARS is a fictional name, and the Latin word for art.

# THE STUDENTS

The observed class consists of 10 males and six females, almost all Caucasian, from an eighth grade class. The girls dressed in shorts and tank tops and the boys wore T-shirts, cargo pants, and Sketcher sneakers. They have been grouped together since the first grade, so they are a tight-knit group. Only six students are characters in the play. These six students represent themselves and their class.

Phil: I play Mario's Nintendo games for fun. Some people think I'm a computer nerd, but I am a rebel.

Bob: I'm not good at art, but I like to have a good time here.

Dizzy: My friends and I are bikers. We wear helmets and tops with the logo "No Fear!"

Dori: We're not interested in school. Everything is a joke. We just want to have fun.

Katie: I'm quiet, but I love art and draw a lot at home.

Bunny: Yea, we're an apathetic group in school.[5]

Doc [Dr. Stokrocki] is the ethnographic researcher who is observing the class. Her goal is to listen to the students and learn from them about adolescent identity development. However, she may make other discoveries as well.

The Narrator sets the scene, providing context for the interaction between the characters, and ends the scene offering interpretation and analysis of what took place. To conserve space, I removed the lengthy narrative script elements, and provided an overview of each scene with selected quotes.

## SCENE I. "TRANSFORM YOURSELF!"

The setting was the art room that is located in the technology lab building. The large room housed several large tables and a long distribution island that consists of four cabinets. Several masterpiece reproductions were taped to a large eraser board that students sat around. Karla first explained her curriculum sequence and the lesson. In the beginning, she stressed mostly technical knowledge, combined with self-expression, and based on resources from reading *School Arts*, *Art Education*, but especially from *Scholastic Art*. Karla stated, "I emphasize art elements and technical processes-perspective and value, and use of a variety of media including paint, colored pencil, pastel, collage, and printmaking." The third lesson, called "Transform Yourself," covers self-portrait drawing with shading and morphing two animals, symbolism, proportion, and watercolor wash (Mittler & Ragans, 1999).

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Karla then introduced the lesson to her students based on Dürer's 1504 *Self Portrait*. She explained, "Dürer is the most well-known oil painter of portraits during the High Renaissance" (Scholastic Art, 2001). She added that it was a time when art was exploding in Italy from 1400 to 1600 A.D. Dürer (1471-1528) lived in Nuremberg, Germany and traveled to Italy to gain some tips. His father was a goldsmith and his family was wealthy. He was 13 when he made this self-portrait. When his family realized he was talented, they sent him to a local painter's workshop.

Students responded: "That's how old I am! Did he go to school? He looks silly, almost like a girl! He looks like Jesus with long hair." Karla clarified how Dürer used his own face as the model for Jesus and reviewed information on such art principles as focal point, symmetry, and proportion that she had covered in previous lessons. Then she announced the new project to make a self-portrait that reveals something about themselves. She invited students to "Transform yourself by combining different animal faces. For example, a lion means bravery. Choose something that is part of your identity—at least two animals that you can blend into one face. I want to see how you problem solve." Karla demonstrated an example on the board, gave suggestions, and shared her own finished example. Students responded: "Creepy! Weird! Awesome!" She also shared an example by Cesar Martinez who was from Laredo, Texas, a border town of Mexico. He liked wildlife and in sixth grade he remembers drawing animals for a contest. He combines his heritages in a charcoal drawing, called *El Mestizo, 1987*. The Mexican part is a jaguar and the Spanish part is a bull, drawn in charcoal (Quirarte, 1997). At the end of class, Karla started to take photographs of students as references for their self-portraits for the next class. Students ruffled through books looking for and sharing ideas. Students commented, "Hey, how about this one—me as a toad." "Funny, we already know that. How about a snake?" "Nah, that's too typical, a lizard is more interesting." "My sign is Leo so I'm doing a lion." "Oh no! Not that! I'm scared" [joking]. The class bell rang and the students left chanting. "Lions, tigers, and bears, OH MY!" Narrator translated that students seem amused by the assignment and spent time brainstorming, looking for pictures, and joking.

## SCENE II. "I CAN'T DECIDE!"
The setting was the same art room. Around each table, several students flipped through magazines and books searching for photographs and pictures of animals. The girls put on makeup, twirl their hair and gossip about their boyfriends. Karla reminded them to find two animal pictures to combine with their photograph to make a self-portrait. Students shared their preliminary ideas when Doc asked them. Boys responded, "No clue. Maybe a horned owl. Maybe a bull—I

added horns on my head. I got the idea from the worksheet—to substitute the nose. This is hard. Art is supposed to be fun!" Girls added, "A cat—cats are cute! Polar bear. I copied snail shells from a book and made them into earrings. Bear and tiger cat. I have two cats at home."

The narrator summarized that students spent the entire class socializing, searching, collecting pictures, and changing their ideas. Different types of cats, which included lions, tigers, and domestic varieties, were the most popular animals. Karla later reflected, "They will be incapable of making a decision. Classmates see solutions for someone else, but not their own work. Many students have attention deficit problems." This lack of student concentration

Fig. I
Polar bear with Sea Shells. I copied snail shells from a book and made them into earrings.

often happened because of external problems, their fear of failure (Martin, 1986), and because of limited academic choices that make freedom so overwhelming (Stokrocki, 1990). Students have freedom and space, but don't know how to use these factors constructively (Hersch, 1999). Karla explained the school's culture by stating, "Kids here do not regard art as a serious subject, but as a fun activity, so they look for easy solutions and parents do not push their children to work hard. The paradox is freedom versus failure [by conformity]."

## SCENE III. "I CAN'T DRAW!"

In the art room, students are sitting around each table and drawing their self–portraits, each at different stages of completion. Karla demonstrates how to use guidelines for the facial parts as in her worksheet. She shows how to make a nose, first by making a round tip at the front and then adding two curves on either side for nostrils. Students' first attempts were simple outline drawings. They shared their woes when Doc asked them what they were drawing.

Students answered, "I drew the face first and added the rabbit nose. Oh, man. I can't get these stupid ears right! I left them off; now it's mostly an owl".

Bunny started by making the cat's eyes slanted and smeared them. Karla showed her how to shade the eyes and make eyelids. Karla suggested, "Draw the nose by extending the cheek lines [*Shows how to draw them*]. You want to get five eyes across the page and bring the face up farther for proportion (Figure 3).

Let's see what you can do now." The narrator summarized that Karla pushed her students to use different animals and details, such as texture and color. She also challenged her talented students to go beyond the assignment. Teachers

often push students to go beyond the information given (Bruner, 1973). Karla later admitted, "I used these more gifted students' drawings as models for students in other classes. No matter how hard I coaxed, not all students were willing or ready to add features. Readiness seems to be a persistent problem."

## SCENE IV. "I'M FRUSTRATED!"

The setting was the art room again, but it was messier with papers lying around, and paints and brushes in the sink. Karla demonstrated how to paint a watercolor wash over a self-portrait and how to add details with colored pencils. She gathered students around one table to see her watercolor example of half-girl and half-tiger and to demonstrate watercolor wash techniques. Bob exclaimed, "How cool!"

Later, she began to give individuals suggestions, "I like the gray mane but if you add yellow, use the gold with a tiny bit of purple as a color accent. The lion has long hairs not short ones. Add some background color." Then students started to ask questions, "Do we have to paint the whole background? Do my colors have to be realistic?" Karla answered, "Because we are running out of time, do bits and pieces and add details in colored pencil. Some parts can be imaginary." Again students remarked about this assignment as hard work. Karla commented on the class progress, "I get lots of whining and I'll continue showing the same people the same thing repeatedly. They hate to paint but they need some skill for high school. The narrator summarized that as the project continued, background color became less important. Karla discovered acts of student resistance and negotiation tactics similar to those described by Hafeli (2000), as an example of an analytical aside. As students' solutions adjusted to Karla's painting guidelines and her assignment relaxed in details.

Fig. 2

Dragon. Brave Dragon. My portrait is supposed to represent a dragon for bravery. I added horns and a pointed, scaly tail to make it more imaginary.

## SCENE V. THE UNRAVELING: "WHAT DID I LEARN ABOUT IDENTITY?"

The scene opened in the teachers' workroom where a video camera is set up to record student interviews. Karla chose six students because they actually finished their drawings and had the most to say. Doc asked each student to describe her/his portrait and what it revealed about her/his identity, as being like their

personality—a combination of emotional and mental behaviors that make each person unique. She interviewed students three times during the semester. A few examples of students' descriptions of their work and interpretations follow. Phil described his rabbit–owl with heart-shaped face and thick and bushy eyebrows, like his own. He added "a 'Y-shaped' nose (to represent the rabbit). The (opened) owl eye is a focal point. He interpreted, "I am like a watchful owl and scared rabbit. I think before I do." The Narrator discerned that Phil's identity traits reveal someone who is careful and hesitant.



Fig. 3
Owl & rabbit.

Bunny drew a combination of three faces where two animals overlap the human face. She chose a bunny because it is her Chinese birth year, 1987, and a cat. She explained, "I like cats. Colors are blended but the animal marks are realistic. The bunny is cute and I'm quiet like the cat sometimes. The animals [figures] share the human eyes." Karla summarized her as a follower. The Narrator felt that Bunny seems both timid and assured.



Fig. 4
Bunny & Cat. I chose a bunny because it is my Chinese birth year-1987 and a cat. I like cats.

Dizzy announced his mask was "a mad cat drawing. It's sort of a wild [cat] man with "O-shaped" lips. I slashed my paper and made marks over its face. It sucks." The bobcat in some Native American cultures represents a loner and suspicion. The Narrator deciphered that Dizzy seemed agitated and swung on his seat for the entire interview. Students later said that he left class because he was in trouble in other classes and he couldn't concentrate.

The students' psychological content selections evoke nostalgia for childhood and adult concerns, since their choices are both progressive and regressive (Nathanson, 1991). The class was playful,



Fig. 5

Mad Cat I [Native American student] made a "Mad Cat" drawing. It's sort of a wild [cat] man with "O-shaped" lips.

almost silly at times. On the other hand, they were rebelling and taking risks. Life today is full of contradictions and demands; parents are on the run, no one is home, and youth need to invent their own community (Hersch, 1999). Karla reflected later that, "They don't want to be unique; it's uncomfortable. They also want to be free but choose the safe. They are so fixated on what others think of them."

On the other hand, the characterization of Dizzy often left us wondering why he was angry and if his anger pointed to a deeper issue—that of a Native youth trapped in a predominantly Caucasian context. Stokrocki (1997b) explained that students were a blend of assurance and unsure-ness. This project was a way for them to explore their coming of age feelings and rites of passage; their need to be challenged, and their need for direction; their contradicting desire for support, and autonomy. They are curious about unknown dimensions of this art project, and they are afraid. Bob later told Doc that no one had ever asked such questions before, and Bunny felt that they were "a confused bunch of kinds!" The Narrator finally surmised that preadolescents are bold yet huddle together, progressing down the yellow brick road in trepidation and chanting, "Lions, tigers, and bears, Oh, My!"

## EPILOGUE

In this class, most adolescents seem to exhibit a temporary bi-culturality of shared meanings. Their search for identity involves the question of which cultural identity and values to explore and transmit. Students revealed their mostly Caucasian roots and their adolescent popular culture influences. Embedded in popular culture are gender influences that focus on the different themes and

subject matter that distinguish art works made by girls from those made by boys (Duncum, 1997). By helping students to discover the hidden meanings of their artistic intentions, art educators might help them to understand the gendered stereotypes that affect their drawings. Such forays provide "transcendence or temporary relief from the youth's preoccupation with their own real life bodies" and perversions of violence and sex (jagodzinski, 2004, p. 273).

**What did the teacher learn about adolescents' identity choices?** Ms. Primosch was surprised that any of her students would experience frustration when using animals to represent themselves. She felt that to alleviate students' anxiety in the future, she would ask them to choose alternative identities. "A teacher cannot force students to address their multiple identities, but rather educators should support students to make such choices as they wish" (Knaus, 2006, p. 412). In this case, the identity concept emerges as a complicated issue with several dimensions.

**What did the professor learn about adolescent artists and about research?** I learned that these preadolescents seemed confused about their identities and were experimenting with alternatives (Kroger, 1996). This study also revealed a culture of one specific art class, which students defined as "apathetic," and where peers were of great influence. Perhaps this micro-culture of apathy is reflective of apathy in larger mainstream American culture.[6] Students' comments revealed public personae, insights that are culturally contested and/or approved. In addition, an empathetic performance can intensify this message. "Performances do not proceed in ideological innocence and axiological purity" (Conquergood, 1985, p. 2). The ethics of performance cultural studies demanded that performers and writers take responsibility for how they interpret another person's life experiences.[7] Such research enabled me to seek many perspectives about the play, including local Mexican and Native American viewpoints. This opportunity leads to further discussion about race in an age of school re-segregation (Tatum's, 2007). Similar to adolescent search for identity, the search for interpretations and insightful vision spurred my persistence to continue to pursue deeper "meanings."

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6   Generation X students appear apathetic and clueless. On the other hand, they have an emerging sense of self; therefore their characterizations are inconclusive. Could it be that some students' personalities or identities are incongruous with their socially rigid school environment (Wilson, 1998)? In this case, the community has upper class aspirations with which the middle class students cannot compete. Similar to the play, the "Wizard of Oz," do these identities reflect the American aspirations in general (Van Cleaf, & Funkhouser, 1987)?

7   Since the study consisted of the observation of regular instructional practices in a school, with no treatment nor intervention on the researcher's part, the study is exempt from formal Institutional Review Board Human Subjects Application and Review. The teacher wrote a letter to the Institutional Review Board stating that the research was part of her curriculum. Students were aware of the purpose of the research and performance and their voices were not altered. The research thus falls within the institutional research guidelines, according to Johnny Saldaña, Professor of Drama and editor of Ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005) (personal communication, June 12, 2006).

**What did graduate students as performers learn through this research?**
After the performance, I asked the graduate students to summarize what they learned about adolescent cultural identity, about translating research into a performance, and about performance as a teaching tool. Graduate students enjoyed the experience and offered a few suggestions. They discovered that the majority of selected animals were some form of cat, such as a lion or tiger. Identity traits varied with gender differences. They felt that most male adolescents were risk-takers and expressed some individuality in their work—bravery and independence. However, the graduate students surmised that female adolescents mostly reacted to their own physical appearance, wanting to be pretty, in association with their chosen animal. They felt that female students therefore were inclined to choose animals and details that were based on gendered social acceptance.[8] A reviewer of this article however noted a persistent bias in regards to gender identity, for example the belief that boys are braver than girls (Butler, 2004). We all missed another innuendo regarding a student's remark about the artist Dürer "looking silly, almost like a girl." Primosch noted that she should have asked students "Haven't you seen guys with long hair?" She should also confirm that all the students are free to express their individuality differently as related to their physical appearance and emotions.

Graduate students proposed that preadolescent choices seemed superficial and peer-related. They felt that preadolescents are not asked to make self-reflections on their identity choices, especially about what they learned about their identity. They recommended that preadolescents need experience using self-reflection questions and possibly even opportunities to write narratives about themselves.

Graduate students discovered that research in general involves negotiating, in this case with students whose impressions of themselves a researcher wishes to elicit. It also involves negotiating with participants in the performance, cooperating with others who are interpreting the text of the dialogue, which constitutes data and analysis of it within the study. Research can be expressed through the multiple opinions of participants, through performance of what participants had to say, and the oral presentation of a study can be creatively formatted. They also discovered, as one student suggested, "the difficult task of making the clearest and richest sense of the script."

Finally, graduate students became excited about the possibilities of performance as a teaching tool. One student wanted to try the script with his high school students; another student suggested that the university senior field experience be written as a play or story, which would be a more inviting format to read. A final student summarized, "While we think of the teaching act as an

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8  Tuman (1999), for instance, compared the drawings of male and female students, ages 7-12 and found that girls tended to choose gendered feminine content such as social and caring experiences and concern for physical appearance, nature, and animals. Whereas boys were inclined to select images of power and humor.

oral presentation, the potential of a reader's theater performance by an array of voices is exciting in comparison."

## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Transforming the ethnographic script into a performance presents several challenges and possibilities. Remaining authentic to the ethnographic script is one challenge. Karla felt that I portrayed her students' behavior and identity accurately. She confessed, "You got to know my students better than I did." Another problem were the changes suggested by graduate students. One graduate student interpreted the title meaning of scene III, "I Can't Draw," not in the sense of the student's original statement, that she couldn't draw at all, but that the students couldn't draw the nose in proportion. In exploring the student's statement that she couldn't draw, my university students realized adolescent art students who have never drawn before would be threatened by the realism part of the assignment. As noted earlier, Zander (2007) has argued, "When we ask students to tell their stories [or write a play] about the art they make, or help them find meaning in the aesthetics of their own lives, we change the nature of classroom talk" (p. 200) and instruction. Such a challenge leads teachers and students beyond their comfort zone.

Furthermore, how can university professors assist graduate students to understand interpretation in relation to the students who are the source of the script? More emphasis on the context is needed. Readers need to understand the context of the original script to know why students responded the way they did. Identity thus seems to be related to contextual circumstances—local, national, and generational (Anthis, 2002). What conditions foster such attitudes? What kinds of questions can teachers give students to help them work through such confusions about identity? A performance should consider alternate interpretations of the event, such as social class and political climate. Performers, for example, need to understand that nature of preadolescence as a time for vision quest, a search for one's identity (Martin, 1986). Then the resulting script would include the changing interpretations of teaching as well.

Teenagehood is a media construction as seen in students' attraction to the *Wizard of Oz* movie. A reviewer of this article also noticed a shift in the discussion of the concept of identity, which can be considered as the function of the different contexts in which the theories are applied (secondary education to higher education). Adolescent identity and vision quest is now global, with all its online growing pains (McNally, 2008). The field of art education also must undergo its own "vision quest" with cyberspace components.

I have found that the script alone does not carry a sense of genuineness, but the actors' performances and the audience's emotional reactions, especially the

performances and reactions of veteran art educators, give authenticity to this arts-based performance. The play, similar to the concept of identity, is multi-faceted, shifting, full of tension, and improvisational. Thus, seriousness and playfulness merge in "a productive and dynamic interaction" (Hicks, 2005). The mask-making identity construction might transform into perverse avatar play and identity transformation in cyberspace (jagodzinski, 2004). Researchers will need to focus more on these different media forms of student identity and communication—the languages and visual cues, a tendency called codeswitching (Timm, 1993).

Such research requires much risk-taking and problem solving as performers negotiate the evolving event that transforms itself each time the play is performed. This ethnographic study, summarized and disseminated in a play form, also acts as a form of advocacy for visual art in schools, educates art teachers in methods to guide youth in creating art with meaningful content by discovering themselves, and acts as a catalyst for dialogue about how art should be taught.[9]

9  Thank you to Robert Sweeny for his editorial advice and his earlier work on structuring research as a play format.

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# A Selection from *Tourists of History*[1]

MARITA STURKEN

## FROM THE CULTURE OF FEAR TO THE CULTURE OF TERROR

Many of the tensions in late twentieth-century American society, such as the rise of right-wing militias and the prison industry and the intensely divisive and polarized political battles, were abruptly relegated to a more marginal status in the public arena after 9/11. The shock of 9/11 was such that narratives of history were quickly divided into before and after, between the era of the 1980s and 1990s and the post-9/11 context with its focus on terrorism. Yet there are many continuities between the culture of fear and paranoia that characterized late twentieth-century America and the fearful preoccupation with security that marks the post-9/11 era. While the 1990s culture of survivalism was restricted to the militia movement, it would expand in the post-9/11 context to include a much broader consumer public with many more bourgeois and middle-class manifestations. Paranoia about the government was the dominant narrative of extremist and mainstream conservative groups in the 1990s; a fear of terrorism and a paranoid xenophobia dominates the post-9/11 era. To say that this fear is justified is true, of course; however, I don't want to imply that the paranoia in the 1990s was completely unjustified about both the degree to which government agents were empowered to invade the privacy of citizens and the way the lives of cult members were perceived by federal agents and the public at large to be of less value than others. The post-9/11 fear of violence is a response to an increase in the potential for subsequent terrorist attacks as U.S. actions and policies continue to feed violent anger toward the country throughout many parts of the world. Yet how American citizens have responded to this charged context has been influenced by the discourse of consumerism that has circulated since 9/11. Indeed, as Dana Heller notes, "9/11" has itself "attained the cultural function of a trademark."[2]

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1  This selection was originally published in Sturken's (2007), *Tourists of History: Memory, kitsch, and consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Republished by permission.

2  Heller, "Introduction: Consuming 9/11," in *The Selling of 9/11*, 3.

Significantly, one of the first responses to the shock of the events of 9/11 was the emergence of a belief, fueled by the media, that the national tone needed to change. In particular, in a time of fear and vulnerability it was no longer appropriate for American popular culture to be steeped in irony. This narrative revealed the degree to which irony was understood to be a symptom of a culture that was flippant about violence and its causes. Thus, it could be argued, irony in U.S. popular culture constitutes a knowing wink in a cultural context in which violence is always constructed and merely the source of disinterested shrugs. It may be that this concept of irony is particularly American, given that irony can be a key aspect of how certain cultures, such as those in Eastern Europe, have mediated repression. The American irony that was under attack immediately following 9/11 was in many ways an integral aspect of consumer culture, as American advertisers have increasingly deployed postmodern styles and ironic humor to speak to media-savvy consumers. Advertisers have thus helped to create a pervasive sense of ironic matter-of-factness in the face of postmodern ennui, contributing to the general sense that if you can't be new (and modern) and optimistic, you can at least be knowing and ironic. The dominant structures of feeling that emerged in the post-9/11 context were about fear, preparedness, and security, and these seemed to be at odds with ironic disengagement.

This concern that irony was inappropriate in a time of loss and grief also helped to fuel the turn toward sentiment and ultimately toward kitsch consumerism that characterized the response to 9/11. Irony is fundamentally about how things are not what they seem to be and a contradiction between the literal meaning of something and its intended meaning. The prescribed codes of sentiment that define kitsch culture offered simple and consumable emotional registers. It didn't matter that a post-9/11 souvenir might be kitschy in offering prescribed sentiment because emotions were so present and easily tapped into.

The post-9/11 concerns about national tone also translated into an attack on postmodernism, as if somehow postmodernism were responsible for Americans being unprepared for global terrorism. In a much-discussed essay in the *New York Times* Edward Rothstein wrote that postmodern thought produces a relativism in a time when "this destruction seems to cry out for a transcendent ethical perspective." He added, "One can only hope that finally, as the ramifications sink in, as it becomes clear how close the attack came to undermining the political, military and financial authority of the United States, the Western relativism of pomo [postmodernism] and the obsessive focus of poco [postcolonialism] will be widely seen as ethically perverse."[3] Rothstein's essay demonstrates the degree to which the sense of crisis after 9/11 produced a desire for comforting models of

3   Edward Rothstein, "Attacks on U.S. Challenge Postmodern True Believers," New York Times, September 22, 2001. See also Stanley Kurtz, "Postmodernism Kills," National Review, August 12 2002. http://www.nationalreview.com

thought, including the reassuring philosophical frameworks that could uphold such simple binaries as evil and innocence. Postmodernism, with its constant questioning and refusal to affirm binary ways of thinking, had to be set aside, if not demonized, in a time of vulnerability.

The crisis that immediately followed 9/11 was not only political and national (if not philosophical); it was a crisis of economics and consumerism. It revealed the degree to which American culture is dependent both symbolically and economically on the activity of consumerism. In the first weeks following 9/11, consumer culture in the United States was at a standstill. The airlines did not fly any planes until September 14, and then resumed on very limited schedules, losing billions of dollars. With most Americans in a state of shock, there was little activity that fell within the framework of normality. Most obviously, television stations did not show regular programming for several days, running twenty-four-hour coverage of the crisis and losing almost $400 million in revenue.[4] Lynn Spigel writes about "the broader havoc that 9/11 wreaked on television—not just as an industry—but also as 'a whole way of life'":

> The nonstop commercial-free coverage, which lasted for a full week on major broadcast networks and cable news networks, contributed to a sense of estrangement from ordinary life, not simply because of the unexpected nature of the attack itself but also because television's normal routines—its everyday schedule and ritualized flow—had been disordered.... By the weekend of September 15, television news anchors began to tell us that it was their national duty to return to the "normal" everyday schedule of television entertainment, a return meant to coincide with Washington's call for a return to normalcy (and, hopefully, normal levels of consumerism). Of course, for the television industry, resuming the normal TV schedule also meant a return to commercial breaks and, therefore, TV's very sustenance.... Just one week after the attacks the television networks discursively realigned commercial entertainment with the patriotic goals of the nation.[5]

The return to the television schedule was not only a return to programming, it was a return to advertising as the economic underpinning of television and also as a signifier of the comfort of routine. The reappearance of television commercials thus marked the end of the state of emergency. Advertisements signaled routine and the comfort of the mundane. This move from shock and mourning to routine consumerism, and an increased urgency about promoting consumerism, took place quite rapidly. Strangely, while taboos about irony and

4    Wayne Friedman and Richard Linnett, "Commercial-Free TV: Cost $400 Mil," *Advertising Age* 72.38 (2001): 3. They reported $378 million in losses, while the *Wall Street Journal* estimated $320 million. Venessa O'Connell, "TV Networks Cut $320 Million of Ads in Crisis," *Wall Street Journal* September 19, 2001, B5.

5    Spigel, "Entertainment Wars" 236-37.

comedy were still in place, a belief in consumerism reemerged within a week after 9/11 without creating much controversy. For many consumers, the turn to retail apparently functioned as an expression of patriotism, if not defiance, a way to demonstrate that they had "not given in to the terrorists at all."[6]

Among the objects that Americans purchased in large numbers in the first week or two after 9/11 were American flags, which quickly sold out throughout the country; Wal-Mart sold 116,000 flags on September 11 alone.[7] In many parts of the country these flags were displayed most prominently on cars and trucks. Susan Willis writes, "Taped to the inside rear window, tattooed into the paint, or streaming from tailgate or antenna, the auto flag makes every roadway into a Fourth of July parade route."[8] Using the flag as decoration on automobiles had an ironic effect, given the role of oil politics in the crisis, yet this irony could not be acknowledged in the demand for patriotism.

These small American flags, which were ubiquitous in the first months after 9/11, are at once simple yet complex objects. One could argue that the fevered consumption of these flags, the vast majority of which are produced not in the United States but in China and Korea, was not necessarily an obvious response to the grief felt at the time. The flags emerged when people were searching for a symbol that could provide a visual signifier of their sense of solidarity with those who had been killed and a sense of their own trauma. Was their message one of solidarity and belonging? A few years later, the artist Art Spiegelman would ask, Why flags? "Why not a globe?"[9] In a certain sense, the ubiquity of the flags suggested the paucity of shared symbols of unity for Americans. Even social critics such as Todd Gitlin argued at the time that Americans could embrace the flag as a symbol of belonging, that the flag could be meaningful to citizens (even educated, left-leaning ones) beyond simple, unquestioned patriotism, that, in Gitlin's words, his own act of displaying the flag was "not meant as support for the policies of George W. Bush but as an affirmation of fellowship with an injured and resolute people."[10]

The proliferation of post-9/11 flags was the beginning of a period of policing the flag's iconography. Ironic commentary on the flag, which has a long history in American art and popular culture, was already under siege by 9/11, but the kitschification of the flag took on new dimensions after 9/11. Its status as an icon of the kitsch aspects of American patriotic culture has become so overdetermined (one could argue, so fragile) that the U.S. Congress took to posturing around amendments to ban flag burning (the House passed such an amendment in

6   Scanlon, "Your Flag Decal," 176
7   Ibid. 177
8   S. Willis, Portents of the Real, 20.
9   Spiegelman, In the Shadow of No Towers, 7.
10  Gitlin, The Intellectuals, 129.

June 2005 and the Senate narrowly defeated one in June 2006), despite the fact that it appears that no one is actually attempting to burn flags. Given that an ironic engagement with the flag is impossible in this climate, the flag itself has taken on new dimensions of kitsch in its proliferation in consumer products in times of crisis; it has been used to sell pizza, is worn as a T-shirt, and, in one of its most kitsch manifestations, was worn by Bono inside his jacket as he sang at the January 2002 Super Bowl halftime show while the names of the 9/11 dead scrolled behind him on the massive stage.

In the first weeks after 9/11, the consumption of flags signaled the beginning of promotion not simply of patriotism but of consumerism. One of the most revealing aspects of this shift from mourning the dead to entreaties to consumerism was the degree to which public officials very quickly began to speak to U.S. citizens specifically as consumers. For instance, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who was lauded in the media as a reassuring and heroic presence in New York City after the attacks and who had spoken in eloquent and compelling terms in the first week of the crisis in ways that comforted many people directly affected by the attacks, quickly turned to a kind of New York boosterism by the end of the first week. Asked how Americans could help New York in this time of crisis, Giuliani told Americans to spend money, to get on airplanes and fly to New York, to go to the theater, to buy what they could (and, by implication, could not) afford. These statements would normally be unremarkable in that they fit within an ongoing national discourse on consumerism; as statements by a public official in a time of national crisis, however, they are quite stunning. Rather than telling Americans to work together to help their neighbors, to build community, to volunteer, to contribute money to the families who had lost loved ones, or to help their own communities access their own security needs, the mayor, at the absolute height of his popularity, with the national public listening to his every word, told people to act as individuals, to spend money on themselves, to consume products and entertainment because their true mission as citizens was to bolster the economy, even if they put themselves and their savings at risk.

Just as the return to television advertising signaled a return to "normalcy," the return to consumer practices provided a sense of community with fellow citizens. One Wal-Mart store manager told the media, "The day of the attacks, we had many people who were alone come into the store because they wanted to be around other people and have someone to talk to." Writes Jennifer Scanlon, Wal-Mart "simultaneously offers itself as the necessary link between Americans and their need to keep consumer identity intact: even when the world is turned upside down, we can right it."[11] In this sense, the desire to turn to Wal-Mart as a

11   Scanlon, "'Your Flag Decal,'" 177.

place of connection demonstrates the degree to which consumer malls have truly replaced the village square as an expected site of congregation. Through their patriotic marketing, Wal-Mart, McDonald's, and other brands, have succeeded in allying their corporate image with the nation. When Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans four years later, Wal-Mart proved to be exceptionally more reliable and better prepared than the federal government, solidifying in many ways its reputation as Wal-Mart America.

In fall 2001, the fear that tourism in New York would not rebound for a long time revealed the degree to which certain segments of the economy of New York City are particularly dependent on tourism. Indeed, New York boosterism has often taken the form of tourism as one of the few aspects of New York that allows non-New Yorker Americans to like a city that they normally disdain as arrogant and un-American. As Mike Davis wrote in November 2001, "Now folks in Iowa watch grisly television footage of the FBI raking the rubble at Fresh Kills for rotting body parts…and thank God that they still live on the farm, or, at least, in a gated suburb of Des Moines. However much they may admire the Churchillian pose struck by Rudolph Giuliani or the fortitude of New York's rescue workers, family vacations are not usually envisioned as exercises in 'overcoming fear.'"[12] However, as I discuss in chapter 4, the destruction in lower Manhattan would become a draw for tourists in a very short period.

In the first few weeks after 9/11, the shocked suspension of consumer spending created a crisis in itself. As early as September 19, the media became preoccupied with the story and was reporting consumer spending coming back (though, in fact, this early reporting was overblown).[13] President Bush also began speaking about consumerism on the national stage. By late September, he was sent out on a number of press events, traveling around the country to convey the message, according to the White House, "Get on board. Do your business around the country. Fly and enjoy America's great destination spots. Get down to Disney World in Florida. Take your families and enjoy life, the way we want it to be enjoyed."[14] This public relations attempt to promote the travel industry had Bush flying around the country to demonstrate that air travel was safe—a ploy that rang false given the barrage of security that surrounded him on Air Force One. (It's worth noting that Disneyland was under high security and had been considered a potential target. It has since been under much more strict security measures and has been at the forefront of exploring new forms of surveillance.)[15] In late October, after the war in Afghanistan had begun and

12  Davis. "The Flames of New York." 11. This essay was originally published in
New Left Review 12 (November/December 2001).

13  Leslie Kaufman, "Consumer Spending Returning to Normal," New York Times, September 19, 2001, C1

14  James Gerstenzang, "Response to Terror: Bush Works to Get a Point Across: Time for Life to Return to Normal," Los Angeles Times, September 29, 2001, A3.

15  At various times of heightened security, such as the period before the beginning of the Iraq

with spending still low, the International Mass Retail Association, a lobbying group, and several House Republicans went shopping at a Target store in a photo opportunity to "lead by example." While eating a hamburger at the Crystal City, Virginia, McDonald's, Rep. John U. Peterson told reporters, "If we just hunker down in fear and don't spend normally, millions of Americans will lose their jobs." With apparently unintended irony, he added, "I had a gentleman tell me the other day, 'I bought an SUV to help the economy.' Those who can afford to kick in a little ought to do it."[16]

All the elements of Lizabeth Cohen's consumer republic are at work here: the equation of citizenship and consumerism and the selling of consumerism as the avenue to freedom, democracy, and equality. It is also the case that increasingly over the past few decades, as it has shifted from an industrial to a postindustrial base, the U.S. economy has become remarkably dependent on a high level of consumer spending. Writes the *New York Times* reporter Louis Uchitelle, "Nothing props up the economy more than consumers, and dips in their spending frighten forecasters.... Consumers in America spend because they feel they must spend. More than in the past, the necessities of life, real and perceived, eat up their incomes."[17] While government outlay and business investment form the other big factors in the economy, added together they come to less than half the amount of consumer spending. The post- 9/11 rhetoric that people should start spending money in order to save the economy was based on an economic reality. Yet it was also in conflict with the fact that spending is often equated with optimism. Thus, the demands of the economy were directly at odds with the necessary response to a national security crisis. The historian T. J. Jackson Lears told the *Los Angeles Times* on September 29, "It is one of the real paradoxical concepts of living in a market economy and consumer culture that depends on people maintaining a state of optimism. [This] runs counter to the wartime mentality that they also need. Bush and other leaders have to promote confidence, whether or not they feel it themselves. They have to persuade the public that there is nothing to be afraid of. But there is a real danger of encouraging indifference and not maintaining a state of readiness."[18] Here again, Cohen's consumer republic is clear: one of the key features of the notion that consumerism, rather than civic engagement, is the primary means to achieve social equality is the idea that one does not and should not have to experience sacrifice in order to participate fully in the nation.

War and at times of security alert, there is a focus on Disneyland as a potential target. See Connie Skipitares, "California Theme Parks Tighten Security," *Knight Ridder Business News*, March 27, 2003, 1.

16   John Lancaster, "The Homeland Shopping Network," *Washington Post*, November 1, 2001, C1.

17   Louis Uchitelle, "Why Americans Must Keep Spending," *New York Times*, December 1, 2003, C1. Uchitelle state that in 2003, with consumer debt at a record level of almost $8 trillion, government outlays were $2.1 trillion and business investment $1.2 trillion, whereas consumer spending was $7.6 trillion.

18   Gerstenzang, "Response to Terror."

The advertising industry was particularly badly hit in the initial weeks and months, when everyday slogans that celebrated the pleasures of consumption seemed suddenly inappropriate. Many ads were quickly pulled from publications, including numerous ads that had images of the twin towers, such as a Bacardi rum ad of the twin towers rocking, and ads with now inappropriate icons, such as a Toyota ad at the Pentagon.[19] Other ads whose slogans had now become offensive were removed from pending publications, such as Coca-Cola ads that declared, "Life Tastes Good," and an American Trans Air offbeat print campaign that showed an image of a gladiator with the headline "If there's going to be a war, we'll fight it out on own turf" and a billboard with the tagline "Fly Without Being Taken."[20] Iomega Corporation, which makes computer disks, rushed to pull an ad from the September 17 Newsweek that featured the headline, "Tom Survived the Crash. Everybody has a story. Put it on a zip."[21] Many companies were too late to pull ads that were already in production, and the *New York Times* ran a front-page apology on September 16, stating, "The Times regrets that some references to events are outdated and that the tone of some articles and advertising is inconsistent with the gravity of the situation."

Very quickly, however, many advertisers began to devise ways of speaking to the crisis rather than pretending it had not happened. Here is perhaps an unintended consequence of a consumer republic: many of these ads succeeded in speaking to the feeling of belonging to a nation in a way that the government did not in that time of crisis. Many companies ran full-page newspaper ads that were attempts to pay tribute to those killed on 9/11 while also reaffirming their company's existence in the context of a national and economic crisis. Rushed into production, many of them appearing within a few days, these ads uniformly had a spare visual style of simple text on large white space, which evoked the gravity of the time. A number listed the names of the dead and offered condolences to the families and friends of those who died. In these ads, the corporations themselves spoke the language of the nation, evoking protection, mourning, condolence, and concern for safety.

These ads are, in effect, memorials, which speak to a mourning local and national public, yet simultaneously they are also legitimation ads intended to establish corporate citizenship and particular brands in positive terms. Those ads for companies that had been directly affected by the crisis functioned in ways similar to the many posters of missing people that circulated in New York in those first few weeks. One ad by the firm Sidley Austin Brown and Wood read, "We thank our clients and friends for your expressions of concern and support.

19   Stefano Hatfield, "New Boundaries for Advertisers," *Guardian*, September 19, 2001, http://www.guardian.co.uk.

20   "Judging the Mood of the Nation," *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, October 24, 2001.

21   Judann Pollack et al., "Marketing Put on Hold," *Advertising Age* 72.38 (September 17, 2001): 1.

mourn for all who suffered loss. We continue to hope and pray for our missing colleague, Rosemary Smith, and rejoice in the safety of all of our other colleagues from our World Trade Center office." In this ad, the mere mention of their missing colleague, her naming, retains a certain power. Morgan Stanley, which had several thousand employees in the twin towers, ran an ad signed by Chairman Philip J. Purcell: "This past Tuesday, many of us who work at The World Trade Center returned home to our loved ones. Sadly, all of us did not." These ads spoke in moving terms of loss, the loss not only of employees but of a workplace, and thus effectively manifested personalized sincerity. Companies without a direct connection to the trade center ran similar tributes, including an ad by Best Buy with small text on a large white space reading, "As you weep, we weep, As you pray, we pray, As you endure, we will endure." Such ads blur issues of corporate voice in odd ways. (Who is "we" here? Best Buy? Americans?)
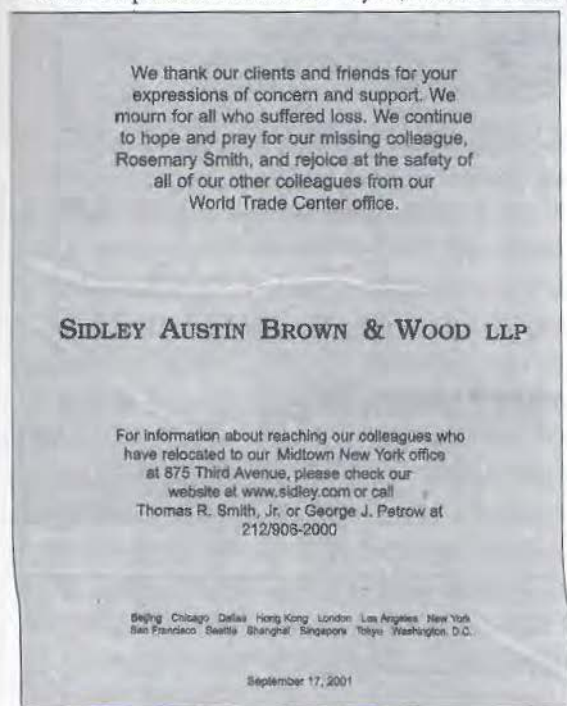
Fig. 2
Sidley Austin Brown
and Wood ad.
New York Times.
September 17, 2001

Ads were run by cities and governments of other countries. One of the first of these was published on September 13 in the *New York Times* by the Oklahoma City National Memorial and the State of Oklahoma: "Oklahoma Cares," it read, adding, "You Stood With Us in Our Darkest Hour. Now We Stand With You." In this ad, an immediate connection is made between the trauma of the Oklahoma City bombing and the events of 9/11, and the support networks that the response to each implies.

Fig. 2
Okalahoma City National
Memorial ad, New York Times
September 13, 2001

The use of advertising as forms of both mourning and affirmation was also evident in several television ads that emerged in the first months after 9/11. Cantor Fitzgerald/eSpeed's offices had been on the high floors of the North Tower, the exact place where the first plane hit; they lost 658 people, more than any other company in the World Trade Center. In early 2002 they ran an ad called "Our Floors" featuring one of their surviving employees, Mike. Standing alone before the camera, he says that he was late for work that day and when he exited the subway, he says, "I remember looking up and seeing that big hole and I was thinking to myself, you know, that's our floors." He continues talking about how work was the most important thing for those who survived, and the ad ends with the tagline, "To work with us, visit www.espeed.com www.cantor. com." It's a risky strategy, given the association the ad has just made of work with death. Yet the ad also aims to present work, and in particular working for this company, as life-affirming. Another advertisement used the voices of the dead to persuade viewers to make charitable contributions. The Twin Towers Fund ran a moving black-and-white ad of Timothy Stackpole, a firefighter killed on 9/11, talking in a 1998 video about how much he loves being a firefighter.

Most of the ads that emerged as a response to 9/11 deployed patriotism in order to urge consumers to spend money and to travel. This discourse of corporate consumerism, in which corporations speak to consumers as citizens, has a long history. Since the mid-nineteenth century, advertisers have used national crises as a means to sell products as American. For instance, during World War II, U.S. advertisers spoke regularly to consumers about how rationing and thriftiness as well as purchasing American goods were an important part of the war effort.

After 9/11, this kind of patriotic advertising took many forms. One week after 9/11, United Airlines ran an ad that included this text:

> On Monday, when you asked people how they were doing, without much thought, or much contemplation, they replied "fine" or "good."
> On Monday, we passed strangers without much regard.
> On Tuesday, September 11, all that changed.
> On Tuesday, September 11, strangers died for each other.
> On Tuesday, September 11, America was knocked to its knees.
> On Tuesday, September 11, America got hack up again.

K-Mart took out full-page ads with an image of the American flag and the directions, "Remove from newspaper. Place in Window. Embrace freedom." Merrill Lynch pronounced itself "Bullish on America," and Southwest Airlines promised to "Get America Flying."

Of these ads selling patriotism, the campaign of the *New York Times* was the one that most explicitly staged the events of 9/11 in the context of history. It published a series of ads starting in November 2001 that borrowed from the history of patriotic kitsch images in remaking several Norman Rockwell paintings from World War II. In one ad, a reproduction of Rockwell's well-known 1943 painting *Freedom from Fear*, a mother tucks in sleeping children while the father stands over them, holding a newspaper. In the original image, the newspaper had a headline relating to World War II, with the words "Horror" and "Bombings." In the 2001 remake, the father is holding the September 12 *New York Times*, with its large headline, "U.S. Attacked: Hijacked Jets Destroy Twin Towers and Hit Pentagon in Day of Terror." The ads make an explicit connection between Pearl Harbor and 9/11 for those who know the original Rockwell painting and borrow on the kitsch Americana of Rockwell's style. As Francis Frascina writes, the image was transformed into "a post 'September 11' digitized signifier of sentiment, family security, and the nation state under threat."[22]

The *New York Times'* use of nostalgic Norman Rockwell images was clearly an attempt to provide images of paternal comfort and reassurance: the image of a father figure connected to the world of politics via the newspaper who is a reassuring presence in a child's bedtime ritual. In the months after 9/11, marketers talked often about the comfort of familiar brands and predicted that activities that affirmed tradition and homeyness would be popular. The marketing forecasters Trend Center predicted the following indicators for post-9/11 life by October 1: "Community—people will seek out ways to socialize, including hobbies and special interest clubs. Dining—consumers will enjoy hearty comfort food rather than haute cuisine. More time will be spent with the family rather

22   Frascina. "The New York Times," 100.

than in restaurants. Fashion—will be either defiant, with bright colors and crisp styles or subdued with darker shades."[23]

Realtors reported that numerous well-to-do families almost immediately began to redecorate in materials like soft cotton that conveyed "comfort feeling."[24] Like the Kenneth Cole ads with which I began this chapter, many advertisements reverted to images of comfortable furnishings and human contact. That comfort was being sold fit quite readily within the branding of the nation, in which national symbols are sold as forms of security and identity formation. Before 9/11, the brand of the nation was already constructed as an affirmative social space in which to construct individual identities. This enabled the connections between comfort and nationalism that proliferated in the first few post- 9/11 years, with the attendant consequence that dissent or public debate became marked as the antithesis of comfort and thus "anti-American."

Many of these ads succeeded in speaking to a post-9/11 audience that was already participating in the consumption of symbols of patriotism. Yet even in a context in which kitsch patriotism was rampant, certain ads that aimed to capitalize on making connections between their products and the 9/11 crisis were subject to criticism. The humor magazine *Onion* capitalized on this with the satiric headline "Dinty Moore Breaks Long Silence on Terrorism with Full-Page Ad." In an age when consumers are particularly savvy to the construction of advertising slogans, patriotic messages are subject to the same kind of cynicism as many traditional ads. Within the advertising industry, there was debate about where the line existed between tasteful campaigns that spoke to mourning consumers and campaigns that crassly attempted to cash in on tragedy. The ad executive David Lubars told the *Los Angeles Times* that it is better to run a traditional spot "as opposed to attaching some transparent, plastic patriotism to it."[25] One General Motors campaign, "Keep American Rolling," and Ford Motors' campaign "Ford Drives America" were slammed by the *Advertising Age* columnist Bob Garfield for precisely that. General Motors' campaign promoted zero-interest financing and featured the voiceover, "On Sept. 11, the world as we knew it came to a halt. We sat glued to our television, watching events unfold that shook us to our very core. And, suddenly, the little things that had previously divided us became wholly insignificant. Now, it's time to move forward." Noting that GM was advertising a consumer incentive it would normally have been selling anyway and calling this one of several campaigns that was "beyond belief and beneath contempt," Garfield wrote that the Keep

23   Becky Ebenkamp and Andrew Greenfield, "Seeking Situation 'Normal,'" *Brandweek*, 42.36 (October 1, 2001): 16-17.

24   Noel C. Paul, "Who Is the New American Consumer?," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 22, 2001.

25   Greg Johnson and Marla Dickerson, "Running Ads Up the Flagpole," *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 2001, A1.

America Rolling "zero-interest sales promotion (McCann-Erickson Worldwide, Troy, Mich.) was one of the most unseemly episodes in the history of American marketing. Want to help your country? Buy a Buick. How dare they? Ford had a nearly-as-contemptible me-too version."[26] Garfield compared the opportunism of these ads to a Makita power tools ad that ran after the Oklahoma City bombing, in which the company thanked the rescuers and called attention to its donation of power equipment in the rescue effort. Similarly, when Motorola used an image in its annual report of two New York firefighters with the company's radios, it was roundly criticized. Firefighters, who were concerned that malfunctions of the radios had cost lives, called the use of the photograph a "disgrace and an offense."[27]

Marketers thus believe that it is risky for companies to flaunt their charity work in times of crisis. Kenneth Cole's "Today Is Not a Dress Rehearsal" campaign was consistent with Cole's reputation for speaking to social issues and donating proceeds to charity, but there were other companies that were accused of using 9/11 tie-ins to sell products under the guise of charity. For instance, Madden shoe company sold thirty-five thousand pairs of sneakers called The Bravest for $49.95 with the promise that proceeds would help the families of dead firefighters. Only after confronted by reporters did the company pledge 10 percent of the profits to firefighter charities. The Madden chief executive defended the company's profits of $400,000 by saying, "We have stockholders, so we walk the line between doing what is good for the stockholder and the company and doing these good deeds." He added a statement that would be laughable were it not in concert with the political spin at the time: "The most patriotic thing we can do is make money."[28]

In the first months after 9/11, the majority of ads that directly addressed the economic crisis were produced by companies that were specifically threatened, in particular, airlines, car dealers, and the travel industry. Saudi Arabia, which had been the home country of a significant number of the hijackers, ran several newspaper ads in the weeks after 9/11 that offered support and condolences.[29] When that country also produced an expensive television campaign in May 2002 which featured images of U.S. leaders, such as Colin Powell, meeting with Saudi leaders and the tag lines "The People of Saudi Arabia: Allies against Terrorism," a number of cable channels refused to run them.[30]

26   Bob Garfield, "The Bad, the Worse, the Ugly," Advertising Age 72.52 (2001): 14. See also Bob Garfield, "Patriot Games," Advertising Age 72.42 (2001): 1.

27   Heller, "Introduction," 12.

28   David Barstow and Diana B. Henriques, "9/11 Tie-Ins Blur Lines of Charity and Profit," New York Times, February 2, 2002, A1.

29   Katherine Kinnick, "How Corporate American Grieves: Responses to September 11 in Public Relations Advertising," Public Relations Review 29.4 (2003): 443-59.

30   Associated Press, "Saudi Arabia Launches P.R. Campaign in U.S.," May 1, 2002 (on FoxNews.com website).

Significantly, many ads attempted to make connections, between the economic crisis and the workers whose jobs would be the most affected if Americans did not begin to consume as they had before. After marketing research showed that the public found employees to be credible, United Airlines produced several ads in October 2001 that placed its employees directly before a stationary camera and asked them to speak about their work.[31] In one ad, flight attendants, mechanics, and pilots, some of them visibly moved, introduce themselves and talk about their feelings about working after 9/11. One woman says that she was told to take a break after working eleven days straight, to which she responded, "I don't want to. I feel that I need to be here." Others remark, "As a company we have grown closer together," and "As long as we stick together and stay together, no one can divide us. We are United."

In its visual simplicity and intimacy, the ads effectively showed that work was a strategy often used by people to deal with loss. At the same time, the ad was a reminder that a number of United Airlines employees had died on 9/11, in terrifying and brutal ways. American Airlines ran a television ad campaign in early 2002 that included a montage of images of employees walking through airports, of planes framed by sunsets, and of employees guiding planes into airport gates, with the text: "We are an airline. But we realize we are something more. We are an engine that powers the free flow of people and ideas and products and joy."

It is easy to criticize this kind of affirmation advertising that connects corporations to the nation. This deployment of national and patriotic discourses, with its ideological linkage of airline travel with idealized concepts of freedom and the "free flow of people and ideas," obscures the complexity of the role of the airline industry in the post-9/11 context. Similarly, the United Airlines campaign's use of employees performing their loyalty to the company depicts an idealized context in which issues of labor disputes, low pay, downsizing (all very present after 9/11) are unacknowledged in a mystification of labor. It is the case, of course, that while American popular culture, advertising, and government entities often present affirming images of work, U.S. government policies and industry practices have actively aided in the draining of large numbers of jobs

31. "Marketing Mood," NewsHour with Jim Lehrer. December 27, 2001. http://www.pbs.org.

from the American economy. Work, like innocence, is a highly mythical aspect of national narratives.[32] Yet one can have little doubt that these testimonies are genuine. When a site of work becomes a site of violence and emergency, it creates a heightened sense of purpose. Aaron Shuman and Jonathan Sterne write:

> The conceit of the United ads was that the airline discovered its workers had better things to say than anything the ad agency had scripted. So it put them on the air to tell their stories: as if United were a benevolent corporation, transparent in its motives, with the same stake in the process of business recovery as its employees. Their declarations of pride and determination in the face of grief and loss suggested their recovery was our own as well, customers and labor linking arms in a mission of holy consumption to save a corporate country.[33]

It is crucial to see the way that these ads, however they glossed over the different stakes of corporate officials and workers, are effective in making the connection between consumerism and the nation in ways that are more compelling than the specter of the president talking about smoking out terrorists or congressmen eating burgers at McDonald's. These ads speak to the stakes of the dependence of the economy on consumers in terms that make clear that those stakes are about workers keeping their jobs. These airline ads thus perform nationalism effectively. They speak to "a people" in ways that can make one can feel easily interpellated by. The ads offer comfort and reassurance to traumatized consumers, promising that the experience of flying on an airplane will return to normalcy.

These ads are also about selling security, not only the security to get on an airplane and to speak the language of consumerism, but also the security to proclaim the airline industry's survival and the promise of continued employment. In that the airlines are often understood to be national industries that represent the United States to other nations, these ads are selling both the security of the nation and the security of familiar brands. They thus form a continuum with the marketing of home security and the prevalence of a security aesthetic that has emerged full force in the post-9/11 context.

## DEFENDING THE HOMELAND:
## THE CONSUMERISM OF SECURITY

One of the primary modes of comfort in post-9/11 consumerism is the selling of preparedness. In this context, consumer products and lifestyle modes are marketed by corporations and promoted by government agencies as a means to sell not only the idea that citizens must be prepared for adverse circumstances such as terrorist

32  Thanks to Erika Doss for making this point to me.
33  Aaron Shuman and Jonathan Sterne, "These Colors Don't Run: Things They Roll Over, and Some Issues that Stick," *Bad Subjects* 59 (February 2002), http://bad.eserver.org.

attack, but also the idea that they *can* be properly prepared for such events. The selling of preparedness is not simply selling the idea that one can prepare for particular adverse situations; it has broader implications, since it sells the comforting idea that one can actually be prepared for the unpredictability of life and, by implication, that life is not arbitrary. In this, preparedness consumerism is deeply related to the central tenets of paranoia, which defines adversity as a "vast conspiracy" rather than something unpredictable and uncontrollable. It is thus not surprising that preparedness is a key factor in the consumer society of right-wing militias and was the key theme of the large preparedness expos before the turn of the millennium. In the case of both paranoia and preparedness consumerism, it is the comfort of structured narratives (we can be prepared for whatever comes; it is a planned conspiracy that is making this happen) that reassures.

A consumer culture fixated on preparedness and home security has emerged with particular force in the post-9/11 era, spanning everything from barrier architecture to home security products to security style. This selling of preparedness and security, which is promoted by the U.S. government as well as private corporations, has been propelled forward by the crisis of 9/11, yet its lineage can be seen in direct relation to the preparedness culture of fear of the 1990s that fueled not only the extremist militia groups but also the public support for mandatory sentencing that produced the prison industry culture. Whereas in the 1990s, the culture of fear manifested in the brutal system of mass incarceration of millions of Americans, in the post-9/11 context it can be seen in the public acquiescence not only to the war in Iraq, but also to Bush administration policies on torture and the incarceration of terrorism suspects at Guantánamo Bay and in secret prisons without legal recourse or basic human rights. This political acquiescence is directly shored up by security consumerism that offers the promise of protection and safety in times of threat and thus mediates, if not justifies, these government policies.

The post-9/11 selling of security directly borrows from the rhetoric of defending the home deployed by survivalist groups in the 1990s and has explicitly created connections between the idea of the "homeland" promoted by the federal government and the home as the front line of national turf. This slippage from the home to the homeland and back to the home is revealing. It is now common knowledge that the war on Iraq, which has cost American taxpayers several hundred billion dollars, has come at the expense of adequate funding to properly prevent future terrorist attacks on the United States. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which was established in 2002 to oversee domestic security issues, is increasingly viewed as inept. In the aftermath of the tragic crisis of Hurricane Katrina in September 2005, when both the

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the DHS (in which FEMA is now housed) were shown to be appallingly incompetent, the public impression that the government would do little to protect citizens from terrorism was solidified. In addition, Washington politics has produced a context in which antiterrorism funding, funneled through DHS, is distributed by state rather than by need, resulting in a large per capita funding for states like Wyoming and low per capita funding for states like New York. In June 2006, this resulted in a 40 percent cut in DHS funding to New York City and Washington, D.C., the two cities that were targeted on 9/11 and which remain the most likely future targets.[34] Because of a prevalent understanding after 9/11 that the federal government would not adequately protect New York, the city created its own counterterrorism unit of the police department in early 2002.[35]

While the concept of a nation as a home has a long history, the use of the term "homeland" is quite recent in the U.S. context, where historically the idea of a homeland has more often been invoked to describe the place that immigrants have left behind. Amy Kaplan writes that emergence of the term homeland where political rhetoric has previously used terms like "civil defense," "home front," or "domestic security" marks "a transformative moment for American nationalism. For one, the usage always entails the definite article (*the* homeland), indicating its unitary meaning, as opposed to pluralistic definitions of national identity."[36] Kaplan writes that it is precisely because of this connection of the term homeland to the experiences of diaspora and exile that homeland "may evoke a sense not of stability and security but of deracination and desire."[37] Thus, she notes, the concept of homeland security "is actually about breaking down the boundaries between inside and outside, about seeing the home in a state of constant emergency" that ultimately "draws on comforting images of a deeply rooted past to legitimate modern forms of imperial power." The use of the term homeland is clearly intended to evoke a comforting image of a place of security and belonging; at the same time, it affirms the capacity of the nation to stake out terrains elsewhere, to extend its sense of belonging to other terrains.

The marketing of products that sell the militarism of domestic life to mediate fears of global insecurity effectively bridges home and homeland in its rhetoric and aesthetics. In this consumer context, corporations speak in national terms, urging citizen-consumers to assume military protocols and to surround themselves with goods that evoke security and defense. Ultimately, the integration of military technologies and lifestyle protocols into domestic life

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34    Dan Eggen and Mary Beth Sheridan, "Anti-Terror Funding Cut in D.C. and New York," *Washington Post*, June 1, 2006, A1.

35    See Finnegan, "The Terrorism Beat," 58.

36    Kaplan, "Homeland Insecurities," 59.

37    Kaplan, "Violent Belongings," 9.

takes place at the level of aesthetics. *Style* is the key attribute through which the domestic home is articulated within the nation in the context of global terrorism.

The federal government is a key factor in this construction of the American home as the locus of security. In the post-9/11 context, the federal government has actively sold the idea through promotional campaigns that U.S. citizens and residents must be prepared for further terrorist attack and that readiness is a key feature of safety. The DHS has actively promoted preparedness by selling the idea that individual consumerism of preparedness products is about doing one's part for the nation. One of the first frenzies that erupted around this government-promoted consumerism was prompted by a mundane household product: duct tape. This silver tape (which was actually developed by the military in World War II) has always had a mystique as a household produce that can fix, at least temporarily, any problem.[38] Stories have long been told of cars held together with duct tape and elaborate plumbing problems for which it was the magical adhesive. Duct tape is a sign of American bricoleur culture, in which an average Joe can fix anything as long as he has his trusty tape in hand, a symbol of an independent, can-do spirit of fix-it culture.

In early 2003, duct tape emerged on the national front when the DHS began issuing high alerts in its color-coded system: red for severe, orange for high, yellow for elevated. There was increased public fear that the impending war in Iraq would result in more terrorist attacks within the United States. For many critics, the alert system is merely a way for the government to avoid liability risk—to he able to say, in the case of disaster, that government officials could not be blamed because they had warned of impending attacks (unlike with 9/11).[39] Thus the alert system has been widely regarded with suspicion, as what it means citizens should do in response is never clear (be *more* suspicious?) and because the Bush administration was accused of using the alerts to deflect public attention from negative news and to help boost presidential approval, in particular during the 2004 presidential campaign. Nevertheless, the issuing of an alert is guaranteed to get media attention. In February 2003, on the eve of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the DHS issued a set of guidelines for average citizens to protect themselves in case of potential chemical attacks. The $1.2 million "ready campaign" was nothing if not commonsensical (with what the *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd called a "D'oh!" website), advising people to keep on hand water for three days, flashlights, and a battery-powered radio and to have a communication plan.[40] The campaign, which was developed with the input of focus groups put together by the Ad Council, also advised homeowners to buy

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38    See William Safire, "Why a Duck? Old Taping System Makes the Headlines," New York Times Magazine, March 2, 2003, 24.

39    Robertson, "High Anxiety," 18.

40    Maureen Dowd, "Ready or Not...," New York Times, February 23, 2003, sect. 4, p. 11.

plenty of plastic sheeting and duct tape to seal their homes.[41] The response to this missive was instantaneous; while late-night comedians made duct tape jokes and politicians rose quickly to state that "duct tape is not enough," millions of Americans emptied the shelves at their local home supply stores.[42] Soon, Tom Ridge, then head of the DHS, was forced to explain that people should wait for word from the government before beginning to seal their homes shut.[43]

Besides being comical, the duct tape episode was quite revealing for the ways it demonstrated the calming and reassuring effects of consumerism on national anxieties. Even when people knew that the small measures were unlikely to help much in the case of a serious attack, they purchased the duct tape anyway; sales of the adhesive rose 1,000 percent during that time.[44] Significantly, this act of consumerism helped to enable the transference of actual threat. On the eve of attacking Iraq, U.S. citizens were encouraged to use consumer products to occupy the status of the victim, in other words, to inhabit the position of the potentially attacked rather than the position of the attacker. This consumerism of defense successfully obscured the fact that the people who were truly threatened were in Baghdad, not in the United States.

It is one of the stated functions of the DHS to provide guidance on how to respond to potential terrorist attacks—in other words, to sell the idea and means of preparedness. The agency does this through a variety of campaigns, all of which aim to interpellate the citizen as a citizen-soldier-consumer, whose job is to protect not only the family but the home. The campaign sells the idea that readiness is the key antidote to fear with the tagline "Today America's families declare, we will not be afraid and we will be ready." On its website, www.ready. gov, the DHS explains various measures that individuals can take in case of a broad range of attacks, including biological and chemical attack, radiation from a dirty bomb, attacks with conventional bombs, and nuclear disaster, often in calmly neutral language that seems reminiscent of the procedures of civil defense in the cold war era.

In 2005, the DHS produced the "America Prepared Campaign," which featured, among other elements, the tagline "Homeland Security Starts at Home," promoting the idea that families need to create emergency plans and a "family communications plan."

41   Lynett Clemetson, "Reshaping Message on Terror; Ridge Urges Calm with Caution," New York Times, February 20, 2003, A1.

42   Sarah Sue Ingram, "Silver Symbol of Troubled Times," Los Angeles Times, February 17, 2001, E14.

43   Aaron Zitner, "Ridge Revisits Terrorism Preparedness," Los Angeles Times, February 15, 2003, A24.

44   Gary Strauss, "Duct Tape Makers Swing into High Gear," USA Today, February 14, 2003, B1.

Everyone should have a plan.

Take the first step. Talk to your family about what you would do in case of a terrorist attack or other emergency. There's no reason not to. To find out other things you can do to be prepared, visit www.ready.gov

Ad
Council.org

Fig. 4.
Department of Homeland
Security "America Prepared"
campaign, 2005. Courtesy of
Department of Homeland
Security/ Ad Council.

The campaign included a series of ads produced by the Ad Council which are based on the notion that the defending unit of American society is the family and which focus on the idea that American families need to prepare with emergency plans: "If there's an emergency, does your family have a plan?" In the print campaign, various family members pose before the camera, each with a list of instructions printed next to him or her. One father's list is "Fill up gas tank, drive home, pack minivan with emergency kit"; one young girl's is "Wait for Mommy at school," while the family dog is told "Grab chew toy, hop in back of minivan." The campaign aims at inclusiveness by showing an African American family, but its construction of the American family is revealing. These are middle-class suburban families, families who have two children and a dog, families who drive minivans. Given that the risk of terrorist attack is significantly higher in urban areas, with New York having the highest risk of being targeted, this campaign looks more like a form of reassurance to suburban America than an effective pedagogical strategy. In a city such as New York, where the vast majority of residents ride trains, subways, and buses, where huge numbers of people do not live in traditional nuclear families or with families at all, these ads would barely

resonate. One final ad in the "Everyone should have a plan" campaign shows a version of a Mad Lib, those children's games used to relieve boredom on long car treks, in which a paragraph leaves certain words blank to be filled in by someone who can't see the text, thus producing an often comic effect of mismatched words. The ad reads, "If there's a(n) _____ (adjective) terrorist attack, everyone in the family should try to call _____ (phone number) to get in touch with _____ (proper name).... Finally, we decide if we should drive to _____ (distant location) or stay in our _____ (room in your house)." Given that Mad Libs are often used for vulgar humor, with players suggesting words to make the phrases deliberately offensive, this ad has the potential for an unintended comical effect.

Government efforts to create a populace that is prepared to respond in orderly fashion to terrorist attack reassure citizens that the government is doing everything it can to keep the country safe. Thus, the emphasis in the DHS campaigns on how individuals should respond to a crisis elides the fact that individual citizens or families can do little to affect the most important security decisions of the country, such as the securing of borders and cargo. The ready.gov campaigns take place in what is largely understood to be a security vacuum on the part of the U.S. government. Not only has the DHS alert system been exposed as a sham, but the news is filled with stories about the United States not properly screening cargo on boats and airplanes entering the country, while its resources are drained in the war in Iraq. In the wake of the crisis of Hurricane Katrina, the images of citizens drowning and stranded on rooftops, deserted by both federal and state governments, affirmed the popular sense of the government's incompetence. In this context, the focus on the individual home as a site for security measures makes perfect sense: if the homeland is not well defended, then the home must be defended. Ironically, the message of preparedness that is sold to citizens by the government can have the effect, not of giving the impression that the government is prepared, but of encouraging citizens to act solely as individuals. This message of self-reliance has as its counterpoint the fact that consumer-citizens are asked at the same time to subject themselves to increased governmental and consumer surveillance in the name of security. As Mark Andrejevic writes, this message of self-reliance is the

> compensatory response to the disturbing recognition that the lumbering institutions of mass society—mass armies and their hyper-extensive equipment—aren't nimble enough to counter the flexible threat of terrorism. The work of defense has to be offloaded onto the civilian population. As the risk is generalized individual participation at every level is required. This participation takes two forms: the interpassive one, in which data about every transaction, every purchase, and every movement is aggregated within the government equivalent of the total

demographic database; and the interactive form in which citizens are encouraged to take responsibility for their role in the war on terrorism as part of their daily lives at work, at home, and at school.[45]

As Andrejevic makes clear, the invocation to U.S. citizens to be self-reliant and to actively participate in a consumerism of security and preparedness also requires that consumer-citizens subject themselves willingly to a society of intense monitoring and surveillance.

The advocacy of individual action in the face of government ineptitude has manifested in many ways. Elaine Scarry uses the example of the passengers on United Flight 93, which crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and American Flight 77, which crashed into the Pentagon, to show how security functions poorly within government bureaucracy. Scarry charted the time it took the military to respond to the information that planes had been hijacked and the time it took passengers on Flight 93 to decide to act: "The military was unable to thwart the action of Flight 77 despite fifty-five minutes in which clear evidence existed that the plane might be held by terrorists and despite twenty minutes in which clear evidence existed that the plane was certainly held by terrorists. In the same amount of time—twenty-three minutes—the passengers of Flight 93 were able to gather information, deliberate, vote, and act."[46] Scarry argues that the United States needs a more egalitarian, democratic approach to national defense, one that relies on the actions of ordinary citizens. Ironically, this position is remarkably reminiscent of the rhetoric of the right-wing militias, for whom the concept of individual action is paramount. Like Scarry, they believe that collective action of value can only take place outside of government bureaucracies and structures. Unlike the position of the militias, Scarry's is a utopian view of citizens working for the public good. Yet the emergence of a citizenry concerned with security has taken place in a context of individual consumerism and in relation to the selling of the idea of the home as an individually defended space.

The home defined by preparedness consumerism is also a networked home. James Hay writes that the home defined by post-9/11 homeland security is a "smart" home that is constructed through networks: "The fashioning of the smart home as a safe and secure home has occurred amidst two intersecting developments: one toward greater responsibility at home, and another toward the proliferation of networks from the home to private/ professional providers of programs for in-home support."[47] The home that is targeted by marketers and advertisers is already constructed as a source of middle-class leisure spending, with such big-box store chains as Home Depot and Lowe's selling not only home appliances and products but the idea that the home is the source of endless

45  Andrejevic, "Interactive (In)Security," 447.
46  Scarry, Who Defended the Country?, 27.
47  Hay, "Designing Homes," 370.

projects and infinite consumer goods. This construction of the home as a primary impetus for consumerism predates 9/11, of course, and in the post-9/11 period it has expanded to include a broad array of consumer goods aimed at selling preparedness and security. Yet, despite the duct tape episode, this consumerism of security has been largely the province of the middle class and the wealthy and has defined life in the age of terror as one in which individuals with means will arm their households against threat at the expense of broader community needs. This has taken the form of an increased reliance on the consumption of high-end emergency supplies for offices and private households, the marketing of terrorism survival guide books, and the repackaging of military vehicles for domestic use. This consumerism promotes a pervasive sense that private citizens must take security into their own hands and defend themselves, echoing the defense rhetoric of the survivalist militia groups who barricaded their homes to wait for the apocalypse. The home must be constructed as a kind of bubble, immune from attack. One company, Regional Environmental Hazard Containment Corporation, has been selling inflatable plastic rooms to consumers at a cost of $3,200 to $5,000 to be used in case of chemical attack.[48]

As an industry, the selling of home (and work) security parallels the prison industry in terms of booming economic success. The Defense Department's attempt to set up an office that would trade on the futures of terrorism was closed down after it was ridiculed in the press, but trading on the uncertainty of terrorism can take place in many other forms. The selling of homeland defense has taken place in the privatizing of the military and disaster relief services through outsourcing to private companies, what Naomi Klein refers to as the Disaster Capitalism Complex; as Hay and Andrejevic note, it has also occurred through lucrative business speculation on homeland defense.[49]

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 used two key aspects of modern life, airplanes and skyscrapers, as their weapons; the consumerism of security for the home and office has focused in part on both. The fears of people who work in tall buildings have been exploited by a number of companies that are selling emergency kits with personal parachutes for corporate executives, who can imagine themselves parachuting to safety in case the buildings are targeted. The "Executive Chute" is marketed by one company as "the life preserver of the sky" and sells for $799; Safer America, a company that specializes in safety products, sells a "high rise kit" for over $1,000 which includes a protective suit, a gas mask, and an escape parachute.[50] Many experts say that such personal parachutes are unlikely to save

48    Kenneth Chang and Judith Miller, "Duct Tape and Plastic Sheeting Can Offer Solace, If Not Real Security," New York Times, February 13, 2003, A21.

49    Hay and Andrejevic, "Introduction," 343; and Naomi Klein, "Pay to Be Saved: A Future of Disaster Apartheid," ZNet Commentary, August 29, 2006. See also the special issue "Homeland Securities," of Radical History Review 93 (fall 2005), edited by Philip, Reilly, and Serlin.

50    See http://www.saferamerica.com

lives and may in fact encourage people to jump into dangerous urban landscapes when leaving by fireproof staircases could be safer.[51] Yet it is easy to see where the desire to buy the emotional comfort of a parachute (long a symbol of a safety net) comes from; the most haunting images of 9/11 were those of people who jumped to their deaths, their fragile bodies falling through the air.

Similarly, tall buildings and urban buildings have been the subject of increased barrier and fortress architecture. The guarded, barricaded, and gated community has a long history in the United States. Fortress architecture emerged in marked ways in the 1980s and 1990s as a manifestation of the fear of urban crime, what Mike Davis identified as "an unprecedented tendency to merge urban design, architecture and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort."[52] In addition, the past few decades have seen a dramatic rise in the building of gated communities around the country. In the post-9/11 era, barrier architecture has proliferated in public spaces and at building entrances in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, primary potential targets in the case of terrorist attack. In Washington, D.C., security barriers have been erected around government buildings, and throughout the world, U.S. embassies are now barricaded like bunkers. The rebuilding of Ground Zero in lower Manhattan has resulted in the design of several heavily fortified buildings, with concrete bases and no storefronts. This image of the nation as a fortress is increasingly evident in the construction of public urban spaces and private homes as sites of defense.[53]

This new defensiveness is not limited to temporary barricades due to security concerns; it very quickly became a kind of urban aesthetic. People are accustomed to being searched when going to cultural institutions such as museums and the theater and have grown used to living in environments that are designed to resemble secure locations, with few, if any, public spaces. Many of these measures are based on antiterrorism plans developed by cities that have long histories of violence, such as Jerusalem and London; they are also pursued in an arbitrary manner that reveals the degree to which they constitute a kind of performance of security. Cultural institutions like theaters and museums began searching bags almost immediately after 9/11, even though they are not likely sites for attack; airline passengers are subjected to an elaborate array of security measures but airline and shipping cargo is not.

The marketing of security has produced not only a new array of products but a new set of design challenges and design style. It has thus helped to create an aesthetic of security that not only integrates security measures into daily life,

51   Heather Sinclair, "Personal Parachutes: The Ethics of Safety," October 19, 2001, http://www.dropzone.com.

52   Davis, "Fortress L.A.," in *City of Quartz*, 224. See also Ellin, *Architecture of Fear*.

53   Low, "The Memorialization of 9/11," 328. See also Blair Kamin, "Land of the Sort of Free," *Chicago Tribune*, October 29, 2001.

but also gives defensiveness and militarism a kind of aesthetic coolness. In this context, a security barrier doesn't have to look like a concrete bunker, it can look like a sleek modernist bench. There has been a surge of design attention to barriers in particular as security that can be art at the same time, what the *Wall Street Journal* terms "security disguised as art."[54] Much of this design has focused on the concrete barriers that are used to prevent the entry of vehicles into buildings. The 1993 World Trade Center bombing and the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing both had high destructive impact because trucks were able to get into or next to the buildings. This has produced an industry in the construction of such devices as bollards and NoGos. Steel or concrete bollards, which now surround the vast majority of government buildings, are designed to stop a truck going fifty miles an hour. Sleek bollards are now a key feature of security design. In a particularly effective use of them, the new federal building in Oklahoma City, which sits next to the Oklahoma City National Memorial, is surrounded by bollards housed in large metal cylinders that are lit decoratively at night, in a way that echoes the lit chairs for the bombing victims that sit nearby. While Washington, D.C., has been the site of the most obvious barriers for federal buildings, there are now many projects to situate bollards around tourist sites such as the Washington Mall in ways that are less intrusive and more aesthetically pleasing.[55] Designer bollards have been created by Frederick Reeder and others to integrate into urban landscapes unobtrusively.



Fig. 5.
Security bollards by Frederick Reeder.
Courtesy of Frederick Arlen Reeder.

Reeder has also designed modernist benches that can protect building entrances. His "anti-ram" bench is a thirty-five-foot slab of black granite weighing 43,000 pounds that sits before the steps of the headquarters of Fleet Bank in Boston; it looks like a work of modernist public art. Other bollards are artfully disguised as theme park elements; SecureUSA has built bollards designed as giant golf balls for a golf course near a military base and a massive gorilla bollard installed at the entrance to a theme park.[56]

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54    Mark Maremont, "Disguising Security as Something Artful," *Wall Street Journal,* June 24, 2004, A1.

55    Catesby Leigh, "A Monumental Task of Security and Aesthetics," *Wall Street Journal,* June 30, 2005, D8.

56    Maremont, "Disguising Security as Something Artful."

Similarly, NoGos, which are designed by Rogers Marvel, are heavy concrete blocks covered in bronze and disguised as sculptural forms. NoGos are now used on the streets of lower Manhattan near the New York Stock Exchange. Writes Farhad Manjoo:

> They resemble a comic-book artist's take on a barricade, a playful and handsome gem whose actual purpose—keeping a speeding truck laden with explosives from getting anywhere near the Stock Exchange—is invisible to the public. In fact, people have found many uses for the barricades. At 2-and-a-half feet tall, a NoGo makes an ideal seat. Suited Wall Street types crowd about the NoGos at lunchtime and kids climb and stretch on them as if there were a downtown jungle gym.[57]

The desire of designers to effectively mask the function of security barriers and to give the appearance of open space in secure contexts is often in conflict with the aims of security consultants, for whom the appearance of security is as important as actual barriers. This results in "security creep," in which security experts now trump the work of architects and designers; current fears are incorporated in long-term ways into urban landscapes. Writes Manjoo, "Architecture is an art form of anticipation, the challenge of building structures that will continue to be meaningful and useful in the decades and centuries to come. Truck bombs, on the other hand, are an acutely modern phenomenon."[58]

The proliferation of high-end security design has brought with it a significant amount of ironic commentary in the design community. In 2005, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) produced the exhibition *Safe: Design Takes on Risk*, which combined both straightforward designs for risky environments and designs that critiqued risk culture as privileged paranoia.[59] The MoMA show demonstrated the degree to which safety concerns are incorporated into the mechanisms of daily life: fortified baby car seats, gas masks (distributed to every Israeli citizen), outfits of protective armor that can shield from physical harm and biological hazard, and earthquake survival tables. The show also revealed the degree to which designers have engaged playfully with the culture of fear. For instance, the designer Matthias Megyeri has created a line of "placebo products" that mix cuteness with defensive design. These include fences with animal shapes as spikes, "whose smiley faces, proud beaks and floppy ears allow you to inject a sense of energy into otherwise lifeless urban landscapes," jagged glass shards in whimsical shapes that can be placed on backyard walls, smiling teddy bear padlocks, and whimsical razor wire with "Mr. Smish & Madame Buttly" shapes.[60]

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57   Manjoo, "Cityscape of Fear."
58   Ibid.
59   Antonelli, *Safe*.
60   See Megyeri's website. http://www.sweetdreamsecurity.com

Megyeri's design is a "comment on the growing demand for security in our modern culture, mixed with the saturation of exaggerated niceness in everything that surrounds us," according to MoMA.[61] Megyeri situates these placebo products in the context of contemporary cultures of paranoia and kitsch, but he is particularly interested in having his products operate as both an ironic commentary on contemporary security concerns and as stylish and functional designs. The fact that the rabbit icon on his security fence has one ear up and one down may be a cute gesture, but it also has a very specific security design function.[62]

Other designers in the exhibition commented on the culture of fear of those living in relatively safe locales. For instance, Anthony Dunne, Fiona Raby, and Michael Anastassiades produced the *Design for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times Project*, which consists of several pieces of "hideaway furniture" that merge with the floor and surroundings, allowing someone to disappear within an abode. Ralph Borland's *Suited for Subversion* is a suit to protect someone participating in civil disobedience demonstrations from the blows of police batons.[63] Perhaps most revealing, the exhibition showed the complexity of the world of risk design by mixing straightforward designs with ironic commentaries on risk and essentially refusing to make many distinctions between the two. Thus, the contemporary world of design represented by the exhibition demonstrates the fluid boundaries between design for actual risks (including design for disaster relief, such as temporary housing) and designs for imagined ones. Many designs, like Megyeri's, straddle this border between straight engagement with risk and ironic commentary on risk paranoia. Kosuke Tsumura's design for *Final Home 44-Pocket Parka*, for instance, is designed as a "wearable shelter."[64] The parka is

61    Antonelli, *Safe*, 100. See also Julie V. Iovine, "Which Way Design?," *New York Times*, April 21, 2005.

62    Telephone conversation with Matthew Megyeri, September 20, 2006.

63    Antonelli, *Safe*, 72-73, 84.

64    Hideo Yamamoto, "Final Home 44-Pocket Parka" and "Final Home Bear," in Antonelli, *Safe*, 70.

designed for the contemporary nomad (here, "final" signifies "ultimate"), with pockets that can be used to store food, medicine, and tools or be stuffed with insulating material such as newspaper or Final Home down cushions. The parka is accompanied by the *Final Home Bear*, a stuffed orange bear with an emergency sign on it, which functions as a "comforting toy or insulation when stored in the pockets of the Final Home jacket."



Fig. 7.
Final Home Bear
by Kosuke Tsumura, 1994.

Notably, the MoMA catalogue description makes clear that the parka can be worn as "survival gear" by middle-class consumers, who are then encouraged to return them when they no longer need them so that they can be distributed to refugees and disaster victims. Much security design slips somewhat fluidly between these domains: the serious and the ironic, the bourgeois security market and the world of refugees and disaster victims in need of shelter, and the world of poverty that survives in part on the hand-me-down discards of middle-class consumers.

These kinds of shifting tones can also be seen increasingly in the incorporation of certain styles of militarism into middle-class consumerism, with the recoding of a military style from conservatism to coolness or, at a minimum, corporate cool. Marketing analysts have discovered that baby boomer consumers tend to like overengineered products. The trend of wearing hiking boots in urban settings and purchasing high-tech mountain gear for wearing in mild suburban winters are what the market researcher Jim Bulin calls "preparedness chic": "It's about not letting anything get in your way and, at the extreme, about intimidating others to get out of your way."[65] This correlates with the trend beginning in the 1990s of people purchasing high-end Nike running shoes as fashion items and the marketing of urban styles as outdoor wear by such chains as Urban

65    Jim Bulin, quoted in Bradsher, *High and Mighty*, 106.

Outfitters. Overengineering is not seen as something that needs to be apologized for by middle-class consumers; rather, it is an attribute that signifies consumer confidence and know-how. Preparedness chic is also an element in the trend that emerged during the Iraq War of recent veterans being employed to run fitness "boot camps" for urban professionals. At the Pure Power Boot Camp in New York City, former Marines and Iraq War veterans train stockbrokers, lawyers, and other professionals at 5 A.M. each weekday. When a participant skips a session, the former Marines have been known to turn up at their workplace demanding to know why. One participant, who paid close to $1,000 for six weeks of training, states, "I love the fact that they are authentic and they've actually gone through this."[66] It hardly needs to be pointed out that this kind of military consumption masks many realities of the lives of actual military personnel during this time of war.

Sports utility vehicles (SUVs) are one of the most obvious symbols of the militarization of American domestic culture and the overengineering of consumer products; while they are marketed as vehicles that can drive on rough terrain, most people are driving them in suburban and urban locales. Car manufacturers began retooling their pickup truck frames in the early 1980s to make SUVs for the suburban family market, and the surge in SUV purchases, largely unforeseen by industry analysts, helped to fuel the economy in the 1990s. Statistics show that the design of SUVs, which sit high on top of truck frames, is inherently unsafe, causing higher numbers of rollovers than minivans. In his book *High and Mighty*, Keith Bradsher puts the problem of the SUV bluntly: "SUVs are the world's most dangerous vehicles because they represent a new model of personal transportation that is inherently less safe for road uses and more harmful to the environment than cars."[67]

Nevertheless, SUVs sell, according to marketers, specifically because consumers feel safe in them. Market research for the SUV was famously done by the marketing guru G. Clotaire Rapaille, a former anthropologist who specializes in luxury goods. Rapaille, who uses Jungian psychology and psychoanalysis in his work, has wowed the marketing world by analyzing what he calls the "reptilian," rather than emotional or intellectual, urges of consumers. Not surprisingly, he attributes the SUV craze to the preoccupation with fear and security in American culture, what was described in the pre-9/11 era as an "irrational" fear. Bradsher writes

> For Rapaille, the archetypes of a sport utility vehicle reflect the reptilian desire for survival. People buy SUVs, he tells auto executives, because they are trying to look as menacing as possible to allay their fears of

66   Amy Chozick, "Military Fatigue: Iraq Vets Find Work Shaping Up Urbanites," *Wall Street Journal*, October 15-16, 2005, A1, A8.

67   Bradsher, *High and Mighty*, xviii. See also Lauer, "Driven to Extremes."

crime and other violence.... "I usually say, 'If you put a machine gun on the top of them, you will sell them better,'" he said. "'Even going to the supermarket, you have to be ready to fight.'"[68]

The gender politics of the SUV are revealed in the shifts of how they have been marketed. As Nicholas Mirzoeff writes, the early SUV had masculine names such as Isuzu's Trooper, whereas later models targeted at suburban women had softer names that took on "resonances of the digital frontier, with titles like the Ford Explorer and the Lincoln Navigator directly borrowing the names of the most popular web browsers. Perhaps the only honestly named SUV is the vast Chevy Suburban."[69]

The paradox of the SUV craze, according to Bradsher and others, is that the very features that consumers say make them feel safe are the ones that make the cars unsafe. Consumers told Rapaille that they felt safer higher up in the car because it's easier to see if someone is lurking behind it. They said they felt unsafe if someone could easily look in the windows of their car. Yet, it is precisely the height of SUVs and their awkward maneuverability that make them unsafe to their drivers and even more so to other drivers who might get hit by an SUV. According to Malcolm Gladwell, this means that SUV drivers treat "accidents as inevitable rather than avoidable" by choosing the passive safety of a massive vehicle over the active safety of a vehicle that handles effectively enough on the road to avoid accidents.[70]

The paradoxes of the SUV acquired new resonance in the post-9/11 era and the lead-up to the war in Iraq, when the ultimate SUV, the Hummer, took off in the consumer market. A military vehicle that was first used by the United States in the 1991 Gulf War, the Hummer skyrocketed in popularity in the post-9/11 context, selling well just as the war in Iraq was being planned and duct tape sales were off the charts. While sales of Hummers began to plateau in 2004 and have sagged since, they remain a key symbol of the post-9/11 era. The Hummer is defined by its marketers as a vehicle for "rugged individualists" that sells excess without guilt.[71] One of the ads for the H2 features the tag line "Excessive. In a Rome at the height of its power sort of way."

In the pre-9/11 world of 1991, when Hummers were first being tentatively marketed to a domestic market, they were targeted at Gulf War veterans, who, marketers felt, would be nostalgic for the powerful feeling of these hyper-jeeps. Though he is not a veteran of an actual war, one of the initial consumers was, in fact, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was famous for driving his around his

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68    Bradsher, High and Mighty, 96. See also Rapaille, The Culture Code.

69    Mirzoeff, Watching Babylon, 36.

70    Gladwell, "Big and Bad," 31. See also Lauer, "Driven to Extremes."

71    Keith Bradsher, "G.M. Has High Hopes for Vehicle Truly Meant for Road Warriors," New York Times, August 6, 2000, 1.

Los Angeles neighborhood before such vehicles were commonplace. In many ways, Arnold himself is a signifier of the consumerism of security: faced with an uncharismatic governor and a threatening deficit, the voters of California chose him as governor in 2003 as a symbol of defiance to the inevitable pain of budget cutbacks to come. During a campaign debate he flaunted his image as a Hummer driver, at one point telling rival Arianna Huffington, "I could drive my Hummer through [your tax loopholes]."[72]

The typical Hummer owner has an annual household income Of $200,000 to $300,000 and has purchased the vehicle (which carries a price tag of $40,000 to $100,000) as a second or third car.[73] The Hummer evokes power and safety, but in real-life situations of combat, such as the war in Iraq, Humvees have actually been death traps for American soldiers. In Iraq, an inadequate number of Humvees are armored, since the war was rushed into action without adequate supplies. This caused a minor scandal in December 2004 when a soldier confronted Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld with a pointed question at a press conference in Iraq about the makeshift "hillbilly armor" that troops were forced to construct to protect the vehicles.[74]

The Hummer is a potent symbol of gas-guzzling denial on the part of Americans at a time when the country's insatiable desire for oil has taken it into yet another war. This has made it a favorite target of anti-SUV activists, including an arson attack on a Hummer dealership by the Earth Liberation Front, now classified as "domestic terrorism" by the FBI. The response of Hummer fans to criticism and protests is to see owning the vehicle as a form of patriotism, claiming that the H2 is "a symbol of what we all hold so dearly above all else, the fact we have the freedom of choice, the freedom of happiness, the freedom of adventure and discovery, and the ultimate freedom of expression. Those who deface a Hummer in words or deeds…deface the American flag and what it stands for."[75] In these words, reminiscent of Cohen's consumer republic, freedom is clearly defined as the freedom to purchase a particular kind of vehicle regardless of the political implications.

The Hummer demonstrates a triumph of the aesthetics of a domestic militaristic safety, one that affirms the U.S. imperialist ventures around the world *through style*. The marketing campaign for the H1 Hummer defines it as "a vehicle that can go almost anywhere and do almost anything. One that gives you an incredible feeling of freedom, and allows you to experience the world,

72   Tim Goodman, "Candidates' Debate—All Sizzle, No Steak," *San Fransisco Chronicle*, September 25, 2003, A15.

73   Brian O'Reilly, "What in the World Is That Thing?" *Fortune*, October 2, 1995, 146.

74   See Michael Hirsch, Barry, and Dehghanpisheh, "Hillbilly Armor," 24; and Scott Shane, "Hillbilly Armor," *New York Times*, December 16, 2004, sec. 4, p. 4.

75   Danny Hakim, "In Their Hummers, Right beside Uncle Sam," *New York Times*, April 5, 2003, C1.

and your place in it, as never before."[76] It is worth noting that it is not simply the power to trespass and invade that is being sold, but also a sense of belonging ("your place in it"). The idea of being "at home" is key to any imperialist project. This is, according to David Campbell, a "biopolitics of security":

The SUV is the vehicle of empire, when empire is understood as the deterritorialized apparatus of rule that is global in scope but national and local in its effects. The SUV is a materialization of America's global security attitude, functioning as a gargantuan capsule of excess consumption in an uncertain world.... The SUV draws the understanding of security as sizeable enclosure into daily life, folds the foreign into the domestic, and links the inside to the outside, thereby simultaneously transgressing bounded domains while enacting the performative rebordering of American identity.[77]

This linkage of the world of consumer defensiveness and preparedness chic connects the nuclear family to the family of the nation. One Hummer ad, "First Day," shows a mother driving her children to school. She offers to leave her young son at the corner, but no, he insists, she can drive him to the school entrance. There, he walks through a phalanx of older kids, bullies, who clear the way for him as they turn to the Hummer and say, "Nice ride."



Fig. 8a, b, c
Hummer H2 ad. "First Day/ Nice Ride." 2004.
Produced by Modernista.

This ad portrays the Hummer as the vehicle with which to protect the family in its movement between home and public institutions. Thus, the Hummer as nation drives its children to school with its display of technoprowess; the nation watches its children move past the threshold into hostile territory. The military vehicle keeps the school bullies at bay, and the Hummer/nation promises to seduce school bullies (read: terrorists) into loving American consumerism. The message is that consumerism is precisely what Americans are supposed to be using as public diplomacy.

This ad points to a key aspect of the selling of SUV and Hummer security: the way they have been marketed to women as an emblem of the secure home. Susan Willis notes that during the 2004 election, the media dubbed the "security mom" a viable political type. These media portrayals, writes Willis, "conjure the plight of white suburban moms who, notwithstanding their husbands or the

76   See http://www.hummer.com.
77   Campbell, "The Biopolitics of Security," 967.

obvious comfort of their lives (clean, well-dressed kids, pleasant neighborhoods with well-tended playgrounds and schools, newish often large cars), still profess an overriding, deep-seated, and persistent fear for their security."[78] The security mom, Willis notes, is always depicted as white and never as concerned about the truly fearsome aspects of contemporary American society, such as rising health care and education costs and domestic gun violence.

And this returns us to the home. The home is defended because the homeland is so amorphous. Just as the paranoid narratives of the militia movement emphasized the defense of the home against invasive government forces, the militarized home, with its military vehicle in the driveway, offers the only comfort available in a time of uncertainty, when each day the policies of the U.S. government increase the risk to its citizens. Paranoia and the notion of preparedness provide similar forms of comfort. Paranoia, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick notes, is anticipatory. Thus, the essence of a paranoid narrative is that it succeeds in precluding the unexpected; in Sedgwick's terms, "There must be no bad surprises."[79] All negative consequences and outcomes are fantasized and anticipated in the state of paranoia in order to prevent the state of shock of (innocent) unknowing.

Similarly, a consumerism of preparedness promises that we can be prepared. Participating in an aesthetics of militarism, consumers engage in a style that affirms the dangerous policies of an imperialist government. This consumerism sells comfort in the face of fear and the promise that we can be prepared, not simply for the violence that is inevitably to come and for the unpredictable nature of global terror, but for life itself. In this sense, paranoia and preparedness are modes of being that are as politically disabling as kitsch, since both foreclose on particular kinds of political action. The paranoid citizen is, in many ways, hampered by a sense of disempowerment that comes from seeing life as conspiracy-driven, and the consumerism of preparedness provides the sense that it is enough to protect one's home and not to be engaged in political action. Ultimately, it is comfort that is offered by each.

The prison and the shopping mall, the consumerism of preparedness and the militarization of everyday life, the selling of patriotism and the branding of the nation—these converge in contemporary American culture to maintain the notion of American innocence. The presence of the Hummer in the driveway masks the use of the Humvee in the war in Iraq, and the presence of the suburban big-box retailers allows for the erasure of the prison complex on the outskirts of town. The consumerism of comfort, whether it takes the form of kitsch or of preparedness chic, operates primarily to smooth over conflict and mask the

78   S. Willis, *Portents of the Real*, 129.
79   Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading," 24.

consequences of the nation's action. It is thus a primary aspect of the tourism of history, encouraging a tourist-consumerist relationship to the contemporary crisis of security in the United States. As the citizen-consumer has replaced the citizen, the maintenance of the innocence of that citizen is contingent on the effects of U.S. foreign policy and the U.S. prison industry being rendered invisible. These aspects of American society are clearly in evidence in the context of the Oklahoma City bombing and its aftermath.

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# Turning Down the Burner:
# Fear, Anxiety, and Art Education.

Paul Duncum

ABSTRACT

As art educators strive to promote social justice we may want to invite our students to embrace examples of art and the histories of artists who have resisted the oppressive forces in their respective eras. This article examines the role Czechoslovakian artists have played, and the works they created, in opposition to Soviet occupation in the city of Bratislava in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In addition to providing a cultural, political, and historical context for interpreting these works, the author advocates for the introduction of works of art that stem from this unique set of circumstances to high school students. The article also uses the discussion of unofficial Czechoslovakian art and artists of Bratislava to examine Conceptual and Performance Art and their implications in deviating from traditional high school art teaching practices.

As a foreigner to this country, but one who has visited many times since the early 1990s and lived here now for over 7 years, I attest to the validity of Sturken's identification of a culture of fear and anxiety that pervades the United States. Whenever I visited, even before 9/11, I felt a palpable sense of anxiety here that I do not experience either in my home country of Australia, or the European and Asian countries I have visited (some of which have dealt with terrorism on their home soil much longer than the United States has). Despite enormous variations within this country, overall its ways of life appear grounded in fear and anxiety.

While no one could have predicted precisely how the United States would respond to 9/11, given its culture it was entirely predictable that it would not be good. All 9/11 seemed to do was channel pre-existing paranoia about threats from both within and without. It merely fed into and confirmed the already extant culture of fear and anxiety, which, it is now all too apparent, is a very bad place from which to develop public policy and conduct foreign affairs.

Like any single group of civilian professionals there seems little art educators can do to directly influence the material consequences of this culture. However, because art education now embraces a broad range of visual material it is in an almost unique position to address at least one important contributor to it. Sturken's chapter demonstrates how the most ordinary, everyday item of visual and material culture embodies systems of thought and feeling. And if Lacan is right about fictional forms, like television programs and Hollywood movies,

being the subconscious writ large for all to see (Zizek, 1992), then the American subconscious is a place of relentless, anarchic, and never ending violence. And a violent imaginary begets real violence. This is not to say that watching violent media turns audiences into killers; there appears to be no direct connection between violence on the screen and people being violent themselves. But recent research indicates that watching fictional violence is not without indirect, real-world consequences (see Duncum, 2006 for a review). Aristotle's famous idea of catharsis, and similar popular understandings of Freud, appear to be wrong. Exposure to fictional violence does not allow the release of anxiety; rather, it creates anxiety. And anxiety leads to bifurcation between good people (us and people who support us) and bad people (everyone else)—a division President Bush articulated so well in capturing the spirit of the moment immediately following 9/11. It is not as if such bifurcation leads ordinarily peace-loving people to be violent, but it does appear to lead people to be willing to allow others to be violent on their behalf. Since violence, both real and fictional, begets more anxiety that then begets more violence and so on, a vicious cycle is established in which fictional violence, real violence, and a culture of fear and anxiety are symbiotic. Each determines the other.

Some people blame the media for a violent society, and on the above reading it is not without some responsibility; but since it is only one element of the culture, Church (2004) has argued the answer lies in turning down the burner on our fears and anxieties. Turning down the burner seems essential if our students are to go on to make rational, informed decisions about their relationships with others in the world. It is equally important that teachers, all of us, are able to turn down the burner on our own fears and anxieties, for otherwise we could not hope do so with our students.

The difficulties involved should not be underestimated. This is a country whose historical legacy is exceptionally violent. It was created from a bloody revolution. It practiced slavery until a war that claimed 60,000 lives, and soon after reinstated slavery in everything but name. It invented the atom bomb and remains the only country to have used it. Sturken documents many other reasons that have historically and more recently contributed to the tendency of the United States to resolve conflict with violence, both domestically and internationally. Changing something so deeply rooted as a national culture will not be easy.

Nevertheless some art educators have taken up the challenge, devising programs that address this culture of fear and anxiety. While majority art educational practice remains silent on the matter, exceptions show what is possible; there are examples to guide the way. Drawing from the literature of

art education, below I survey a range of responses taken by art teachers from kindergarten to graduate school.

First, some art educators have devised classroom programs that examine mass media representations of violence with a critical eye (e.g., Ballangee-Morris & Stuhr, 2003), and, as Sturken also showed, how corporate America was quick to exploit 9/11 for commercial purposes through advertising by linking violence, patriotism and consumerism (Green, 2004). Other programs include examining how images of violence raise questions about how greed, superstition, fear and anxiety contribute to violence and war (Milbrant & Bonds, 2000), examining images of war, protest and memorialization (Brickly-Green, 2007), examining artists who have dealt with cruelty and war (Alter Muri, 2004), considering representations of violence as a springboard to students discussing their own experiences of fear and terror (Arnold, 2005), and learning to talk about violent imagery (Dicket & Mucha, 2002). Still other programs have considered the trauma of living in a war zone (Cohen-Evron, 2005), addressed the anxiety arising from recent school and community shootings (Stockroki, 2000), and devised programs for school bullying (Orr, 2004). (See Duncum, 2009 for a more detailed review.)[1]

Most of these programs were directed toward understanding the causes and effects of violence and/or war. Many of them involved discussion followed by students responding by making images. Some of them involved students being directed by their teachers to make anti-violent and anti-war images; other teachers were prepared to allow their students to openly express their responses as they chose. For my part, I believe it is essential that students be allowed to respond as they will. Otherwise, teachers ignore the pleasures of watching violent media and shut down student views, sending those views underground. Instead, it seems crucial to consider the tension, even the cognitive dissonance, between condemning violence from a moral perspective yet relishing it in graphic detail. Not to consider this tension is to reproduce the contradiction embedded in many U.S. movies and television programs of simultaneously condemning violence and offering up so much of it.

Carpenter (2003) usefully offered a model of such an open, free conversation. In a previous issue of this journal, Carpenter described his local, African-American barber shop that effectively functions as a community centre. This is Pat's Barber and Beauty Shop, which Carpenter described as "a neighborhood curriculum" where, mediated by Pat and his fellow barbers, customers always seem to "have some sort of outrageous story, idea or proposition for anyone

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[1]   These references are limited to reports on programs in schools with students. The theme of the immediate past issue of this journal was violence, which was variously addressed by different authors by reference to representation in a range of media, sexual and racial stereotypes, programs on bullying and its use the workplace. Many other art educators have addressed issues arising from 9/11 (see Darts, et al., 2008 for a review).

willing to listen." Yet, Carpenter said, as in any classroom, everyone is challenged to provide evidence and to reference his or her sources. Pat's barbershop is more than a place for a haircut. It is more a combination of social club, recreational centre for youths with nowhere else to go, and a community information centre. Complex and competing exchanges ensure that it is open to multiple layers of interpretation and meaning, "a site of social discourse, interpretation and cultural commentary" (p. 12). There is constant interaction among the barbers, customers, community members, the radio and television, telephone calls and events witnessed through the front window. Advocating this free flow of exchange as a model for the artroom, Carpenter wrote:

> The 'real classroom' exists when the classroom environment is viewed as a complex text—comprised of the interactions among teacher, students, visitors, subject content, artifacts in the room, external references and to other stimuli—worthy of interpretation and relevant to student's lives. (p. 15)

This is dialogic pedagogy, one that privileges what Bakhtin (1981) called a "polyphony" of voices (p. 263), where there is constant interaction between meanings. Here, the meanings created always have the potential to influence others. Ideas bounce around; sometimes ideas are poorly articulated and in search of coherence and connection, yet they are rich in their multi-layeredness, their emotional complexity and specialized knowledge. Classrooms, which are so often a site of straightforward didacticism, are turned into spaces safe enough for students to exchange their views, and open enough to be affected by others.

However, as essential as dialog is, it often remains a purely intellectual exercise about the imagery, behavior and values of others, and this can be true even when producing one's own images in response to the dialog. By contrast, I advocated in the previous issue of this journal the importance of personal reflexivity (Duncum, 2009). Examining imagery not produced by oneself may obviate the need to take personal responsibility. It is even pleasurable to condemn others for the production of violent images. On the other hand, to consider what baggage we bring to an image is to turn the examination onto ourselves.

To effect such reflexivity the notion of the gaze is particularly valuable. The gaze refers to how we as an audience look at imagery, what assumptions about the world lead us to make particular interpretations. Becoming aware of one's own gaze has the potential to act as a catalyst to reevaluate one's values and beliefs that otherwise might remain unexamined. To consider our own gaze is to see how we may be implicated in assumptions we might prefer to deny; it is to see to what extent we may be complicit. That many of us are mightily attracted to media representations of violence is evident reference to the market driven nature of the television, movie and video game industries. To merely

examine media representations of violence without an acknowledgement of our complicity fails to see ourselves as members of a society that not only produces fictional violence as a manifestation of its imaginary, but also permits horrific, real violence to be visited upon others. By contrast, considering our gaze is to take some responsibility upon ourselves.

Additionally, it is helpful to be made aware of just how risk aversive our gaze has become. Art educators, Darts, Tavin, Sweeny, and Derby (2008) refer to the actuarial gaze by which they argue we have learnt to survey our environment for any signs of the unusual as potentially dangerous. The insidiousness of this gaze lies in both how it limits our own possible ways of looking at the world and how easily it stereotypes anyone not like us.

However, even open dialog and honest self-reflection and awareness are not necessarily empowering, and may even be disempowering. Mostly, art teachers ask students to respond to social issues of concern by producing a cultural product of their own and regard this as empowering. However, such productions usually go no further than their classroom or the school hallway display area. Students get to talk back to power but in a highly circumscribed way. Beyond personal consciousness raising, these activities do not materially challenge the wider culture.

A few art educators, however, have attempted to do just that. They have taken their students to public spaces to confront the general public in city squares and crowded streets (Darts, 2006; Pistolesi, 2007). Again an example is offered from a previous issue of this journal. In the days immediately following the 9/11 attacks in their home city of New York, Dipti Desai, her colleagues, and participating students created an interactive flag (Desai, Bui & DiFilippo 2001-2002). Appalled at the media's one-sided story of unquestioned patriotism and revenge, they sought to express other narratives. Noting the sudden proliferation of American flags, they conceived the idea of a flag consisting of a wide cross-section of views drawn from the public. Denied access to public squares or city properties by virtue of requiring a permit, and anxious to act in the moment, they initially took their flag to the first major open space on their campus. This turned out to be in front of the business school building, where instead of the interaction they sought, they were viewed simply as a anti-war group and drew little other than abuse from the conservative business students and faculty who used the building. Later, in another venue, and with a broader cross section of the public, many people participated by adding their comments to the flag. In an atmosphere where a single media message completely dominated, the flag project provided a venue for a range of views to be expressed. Even while acknowledging one's own complicity in a culture of fear and anxiety, perhaps it is only by taking

such direct action that fear and anxiety can be addressed within oneself; and only by such means can it be channeled to help others turn down their own burner.

The task of turning down the burner on fear and anxiety is especially daunting given the grim prospects that now hang over the United States as a world leader. With the rise of other nations to preeminence and the relative decline of the United States, hastened by the current political stalemate, the climate of fear and anxiety seems unlikely to abate.

There are many aspects to the United States, but perhaps none with more consequences for itself as well as the rest of the world than its culture of fear and anxiety. Furthermore, Sturken's chapter was originally published in 2007, and, in the wake of the subsequent financial crisis, the trends she identifies appear to have been magnified many times over. With the Tea Party having migrated from the margins of lunacy to a significant social movement, the irrationality that fear and anxiety breed seems to be on the rise. Thus, what more urgent role could art education perform in this country right now than to attempt to turn down the burner of fear and anxiety. Sturken's chapter offers a best case for the contemporary visual/ material culture approach to art education in the United States, one that engages critically as well as productively with the everyday visual practices of the darker side of its national culture.

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# Visual Literacy in a Consumer Culture: Artistic Production and Criticism as Civic Engagement

Kerry Freedman

A good art curriculum must allow students to fuse emotion and cognition in the visual expression of ideas. It must relate art education to students' present interests and experience while preparing them for a postmodern future. It must respond to the expansion of the visual arts in forms and influence. It must infuse diverse, historical and contemporary visual culture to enable students to gain broad and deep knowledge about making and viewing contexts. And, it must address artists' and educators' growing social concerns and students' demand for change.

Marita Sturken's chapter "Consuming Fear and Selling Comfort" from her 2007 book, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, makes a critical contribution to educators' knowledge of visual culture. Sturken argues that the visual culture pervading post-industrial U.S. is saturated with images of fear constructed by people who work in the media, particularly in news and advertising, and that those people use that fear to then sell us comfort in order to convince us to buy products, services, and ideas. The argument that newsmakers and advertisers intend to promote fear in us is not new. For example, David Morley (1992) suggested that television news instills fear about the world at-large in order to keep people at home watching TV. However, Sturken provides a new argument and supportive evidence to illustrate the strategic connection between fear and comfort. The strategy works—during a crisis (real or fabricated), people will stay "glued to their sets" in an attempt to be informed, and by extension, to try to grasp as much power over the situation as possible. As the use of technological tools has expanded, this strategy has become even more pervasive, so that now people can carry the news with them.

I agree with Sturken's analysis of the insidious ways in which visual culture has been used by news and advertising "professionals" to promote terror, and the ways these people then use the same techniques to sell comfort. There is no doubt that we need to make students aware of these techniques in order to prepare them to critique this visual culture. If people do not resist such

manipulation, they may be considered participants in it because the powerful visual techniques used makes participation seem natural and even enjoyable. In contrast, resistance to such techniques may have to be learned. Regardless of whether people want or like to participate in this process of manipulation, it is still the responsibility of educators to provide an alternative to the particular brand of consumer education delivered by news and advertising media makers.

## VISUAL LITERACY AS A RESPONSE TO CONSUMER CULTURE

The visual techniques and processes addressed in a good contemporary art curriculum are the foundations for the visual literacy necessary for navigating visual culture communication and knowledge. Visual literacy has had several definitions, most focusing on metaphors of textual language. However, text-based definitions do not adequately represent the ways in which images and objects mediate knowledge. When considering learning from visual culture, it is far more appropriate to use the phrase "visual literacy" to convey the psychobiological ways that people interact differently with images and objects than with texts.

For example, when we encounter visual images, we use eye movements to collect various types of information around the picture, rather than following a textual sequence. We tend to interpret the codes of a picture in layers, from simple to complex, rather than deciphering textual codes in a linear fashion. When decoding images, we tend to form an associative context for holistic analysis, rather than figuring out what words mean as the story unfolds. Images can have a powerful, and subtle, impact on people in ways that text cannot and we have a much larger memory capacity for images. Of course, when we read a novel, we form images in our minds, but most of these are dependent on some form of visual experience, including previously seen visual images.

So, visual literacy now means a working knowledge of the highly influential and unique ways that images and objects mediate the construction of meaning. As a result, visual literacy demands both critical and creative engagement to interpret information and construct knowledge. This engagement is a part of the civic engagement necessary for effective participation in advanced democratic societies.

## VISUAL CULTURE, CRITIQUE AND ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

In this chapter, Sturken presents a perspective of response to visual culture that is critical, but it is also dystopic. It does not provide a constructive response to manipulation (although Sturken makes constructive recommendations in the final chapter of the book). One of the purposes of contemporary education must be to provide students with hope for the future. This idea is based on the,

albeit modernist, belief that people can change things for the better and that positive change occurs when individuals improve themselves. However, this belief is also postmodernist, because although it suggests a utopia, it focuses on an ontology of becoming, rather than an epistemology of knowing. The foundation of this type of education is social reconstructionism, which is one of the bases of visual culture approaches to art education.

In the process of helping to create a visually literate population, socially conscious art educators support reconstructive ideals (while accepting that those ideals will not always be achieved). This is important because when children grow up with little hope, hatred and fear are guaranteed to continue generation after generation. For example, Cohen-Evron (2005) has demonstrated that art education can reveal the reproduction of wartime stereotypes and hatred, but it can also help to break that cycle.

Interestingly, students do not tend to watch news programs and many pay less attention to advertising than to their friends' decisions about products. Quite the contrary, students often lead advertising. Advertisers use focus groups to study "cool kids" and keep up with trends these students start so that they can better advertise to those who follow the kids they think are cool. Advertisers only have a few years to make young people commit to brands and are in a desperate search to find role models, such as sports and entertainment professionals, who kids will follow. For students, general feelings of comfort are probably less important than feelings of belonging. But, at the same time, kids in the U.S. are attracted by edgy-ness and individualism—both of which are mainstream cultural ideals. So, advertisers try to walk a fine line with students who are in the process of defining their identities that, at once convinces kids to follow, while making them think that they are being independent.

However, many other forms of popular visual culture intended for students work in contrast to the fear mongering of news and advertising professionals. Forms of visual culture, such as comics, films, video games tend to focus on heroism, social responsibility, and taking action to solve problems.

## CREATIVITY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN ART EDUCATION
To include Sturkens' argument in school means to teach students to critique the rampant consumerism that has ties to contemporary visual culture, but we must also support the development of creative production skills that enable students to respond with hope. From a contemporary art education perspective, creative production is a form of civic engagement (Freedman, 2003). Through their art, students can create new visions of human interaction, alternative solutions to social problems, and other worlds with fewer fears.

Creative production is a vital path to visual literacy—connecting form, feeling, and knowing—a connection that empowers communication (Freedman, 2004). Learning art concepts and skills enable students to express their own ideas and construct their own identities, while providing insight into the artistic motivations and strategies of others.

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