Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education

Volume 4 | Issue 1 Article 17

1-1-1985

Transsubjectivity and the Imaginal Event

Scott Meyer

Follow this and additional works at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp

Part of the Art Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Meyer, Scott (1985) "Transsubjectivity and the Imaginal Event," *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*: Vol. 4: Iss. 1, Article 17.
Available at: http://ir.uiowa.edu/mzwp/vol4/iss1/17

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Teaching and Learning at Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

TRANSSUBJECTIVITY AND THE IMAGINAL EVENT

Scott Meyer

Basically, my research strives to name an alternative mode for inquiry in art education. To date, art education research often has taken a discursive approach; that is, descriptive, empirical. There is copious knowledge to be gained from this approach, such as cross-cultural studies, comparative studies, surveys and the like. This is all to the good. But the exclusive use of these modes of research has led to an excluded knowledge; namely, the soul of the event of creation. I regard these occurrences of creation as imaginal events. Henry Corbin has defined imaginal as a world between heaven and earth. It gives body to the spiritual and lends earth an esoteric dynamism. As earthly beings our means of access to this world is through a poetic imagination. These events of imagination are occurrences of imaginal dwelling, and, as such, they are events in the great tradition of imaginal dwelling. What we gain access to when we open ourselves to poetic imagery is this access to a phenomenology of imaginal dwelling. This consciousness of the artist as dweller becomes its forum and the products of the experience are seeds for further dwelling. I am led now to the central question under consideration. I have said that poetic images are events of independent being with only Primoridal past. I have suggested too that they are also mutually influential occurrences within the historical fiber of the tradition of a place. How can they remain as autonomous, idiosyncratic manifestations of Being and yet be the poetic building blocks necessary for a place's tradition to grow and hold together along its spatial axis? Bachelard rescues us from paralyzing paradox by introducing the notion of transsubjectivity. He says that one falls into trouble when the poetic event is viewed as material to be transferred in kind. . .

> How with no preparation can this singular short-lived event constituted by the appearance of an unusal poetic image react on the minds and in the hearts despite all the barriers of common sense, all the disciplined schools of thought content in their immobility. The question addresses itself to the phenomenon of transsubjectivity of the image. These subjectivities and transsubjectivities cannot be determined once and for all, for the poetic image is essentially variational and not, as in the case of the concept, constitutive.

Thus, through its flexible nature, the poetic image can be communicated. It always seeks in this communion a common denominator and that never occurs other than in the soul. Then the poetic image joins Man through the union of souls. As Bachelard says,

> The poet does not confer the image of his past upon me and yet his image immediately takes root in me.

This communicability of an unusual image makes it possible for everyone to be the unique origin of the poetic image event by taking him back to the Origin of

of language itself. A poetic image is born fresh in everyone. It leads one to the center of one's unique imagining consciousness. In other words, as Bachelard says, the poetic image:

> becomes a new being in our language expressing us by making us what it expresses. It is at once a becoming of expression and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being. . . I always come then to the same conclusion: The essential newness of the poetic image poses the problem of the speaking being's creativeness. In a study of the imagination a phenomenology of the poetic imagination must concentrate on bringing out this quality of origin in various poetic images.

Let me return to my original premise, transsubjectivity and the imaginal event. I have turned to imaginal dwelling in an effort to gain access to what has been excluded--the soul of the creative event. Through transsubjectivity, Bachelard has allowed these unique events their own being and, at the same time, has allowed them the capacity to communicate and thus to educate. There are two basic ways that this is relevant to art education. One has to do with the imaginal events in relationship to one another. Through transsubjectivity the poetic image is born anew and unique within each participant. As such it is iterative, summoning further creation as a means toward understanding. Therefore, each poetic image educates and orients the partcipant in the Great Tradition of Art Education.

The second has to do with the nature of any legitimate mode of inquiry toward understanding this Great Tradition. I have said that understanding within the tradition of imaginal dwelling is itself a poetic event along its path. Poetic language thus becomes our tool -- As now we cease to write **about** events. We write the events themselves:

Transsubjectivity frees the researcher from didactics and offers his readers instead the trust one soul has for another.