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Mentor's Introduction

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mentor's introduction

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Lara Lackey came to graduate studies in art education from a position as a community art center administrator. In addition to myself, as art educator, her Ph.D. supervisory committee consists of an adult educator, a professor of leisure studies, and a sociologist of education.

Too often art education is believed to happen only in schools. Schools of Education sometimes consider themselves primarily colleges of Schooling and Teacher Education, pushing courses in adult education, art therapy, counseling (in non-school settings), museum and gallery education, and "recreation" etc., to the fringes of the curriculum. Lara's research challenges these notions. She claims that while art education may be peripheral and harder to find in schools, forms of art education can be readily identified in many non-school settings--particularly leisure institutions. As she states, this is where she is currently "submerged."

Lara Lackey's study will have implications for persons working in a variety of contexts. She wants even school-based art educators to understand art education practices in non-school sites, and to consider what they can learn from the study of art education in leisure settings. Her questions too, are important for all of us. How are notions of art, artist, craft, constructed and acted upon in a variety of educational settings? I believe that her questions need to be asked and answered in a number of settings--even public schools.

Such questions cannot be answered quickly, or by using methods that lead to only cursory understanding. It used to be said that graduate students in anthropology required at least two years "in the field" before they wrote any conclusions. *Time* is also one of the great strengths of Lara Lackey's work. It is also multifaceted, involving many hours of observation, interviewing, and document analysis. Visual anthropology, via photography, has a special role. But especially important: *she is taking time*. As Lara herself states: Part of being an ethnographic researcher is learning to reflect on the assumptions with which you entered the setting and how your ideas have been altered..." After much "submersion" she is still not ready to write conclusions. Too often, qualitative studies lack rigor and are prematurely concluded. I am pleased that, at this point, we are presented only with *emerging* themes. Watch this space!

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