WORKING PAPERS IN ART EDUCATION

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Contents

Ball State University
Scott Wiley
The Relationship of Amount of Experience in Art to Visual Perception and Picture Memory  2

Concordia University
Nancy Lambert
In Pursuit of the Idea that the Child Art Process Can be Disclosed  7
Alana Stelker-Horner
Sex Role Stereotyping and Art Education  12

Indiana University
Charles Gareri
Artistically Talented and Academically Gifted Junior High School Students: A Comparative Study of Their Backgrounds, Interests, and Ambitions  15

New York University
Chen Teng Beng
Papermaking from Selected Malaysian Fibers: An Investigation of Its Artistic Potential through the Creation of Original Paper Artworks  21
Moses Fowowe
Yoruba Traditional Art: Symbolism and Interpretation  25

The Ohio State University
James Lomis
Textbooks for Art Education: Functions and Limitations  30
The Pennsylvania State University

Scott Meyer
Place and Imaginal Dwelling 36

Bob Troxell
A Penetration of the Historical Theory of Poetic Tropes: A Phenomenological Investigation of the Iconic Historical Field: A Hermeneutic Study 41

The University of Iowa

Steve McGuire 49
So, Why Sit Still?

Joan Yochim
The Meaning of Art Environments for Art Students 56

University of Georgia

Susan Atkins
The Effectiveness of a Studio-Based Art Humanities Curriculum 62

University of Missouri

Ann Klesener
Missouri Artist Jesse Howard: An Ethnographic Study 66

University of Oregon

Heather Anderson
Awareness of the Natural Landscape: A Three-Part Strategy Analyzing the Lives and Works of Landscape Painters for Educational Purposes 75

University of Wisconsin

Kerry Freedman
Comparisons of Recognition Capabilities and Preferences for Representational, Abstract, and Non-Objective Paintings 81

Connie Landis
Teachers' Decision Factors in Judging and Planning Discussion Activities for Elementary Art Programs 86
Preface

In October of 1982 a group of fourteen professionals in anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology, and education gathered for a symposium on children's responses to a literate environment. A psychologist, Frank Smith, organized the meeting. In the introduction Smith expressed concern that for the past two or three decades educational theory and, indeed, practice have been dominated by theories from psychology. His intention was to bring together as many of the prevailing views on literacy as practical constraints would allow. He was dismayed because professionals from various disciplines in the usual pursuit of careers are not aware of work across academic boundaries; the meeting and published proceedings are part of his effort to remedy parochial perspectives on a subject which touches everyone.

In April of 1984 graduate students, their mentors, and other interested individuals assembled at the National Art Education Association in Miami for the second year to share overviews of their research. What relationships might be observed between these two events? For one, it strikes me that the notion of a literate environment has some resemblance to that of an aesthetic environment; indeed, the latter idea is so prevalent that we take for granted children's teaching themselves to draw, while studies on children who teach themselves to read represent a rather radical conception for many who are involved in language arts. Thus, some of the participants in the literacy symposium looked to research in children's drawings for theoretical grounding. Another similarity between the two groups is the intention to bridge usual distinctions. In the case of the Research Session for Graduate Students in Art Education, my concern is to bring together the different philosophies and methodologies that prevail in art education doctoral programs at universities in North America. Smith's organizational effort was directed toward an interdisciplinary confluence. While my focus might be described as inter-institutional one outcome of this session is the consciousness of the interdisciplinary involvements in art education. This observation is manifested in the papers that follow.

Readers of this issue of Working Papers in Art Education certainly will recognize that the emerging professionals in our own field, as represented by these doctoral students, do, indeed, span a number of disciplines both in theoretical grounding and in their choice of research methodologies. Clearly, such diversity reflects the abundant variety of mentors and institutional milieus available to prospective graduate students in art education.

As the mentors write of contexts for their students' research those mentors also tell us much about their philosophical roots; and in the voices of the sixteen students we may hear echoes of their mentors and, perhaps, of their universities. They ask familiar questions about classrooms, or textbooks, or artistic talent, or the relations of visual perception to art, or the role of gender in shaping our learning, but the form of these queries is unique to each individual. Others explore less visited territories of individual histories, or specific art processes and traditions, or the poetics of aesthetics, yet the worlds of art from which these searches embark surely are familiar terrain to all of us.

I am pleased to welcome two additions in this publication. Chew Teng Beng
from Malaysia and Moses Oladipo Fowowe of Nigeria extend our reflections on art education beyond the continent of North America. The drawings by Priscilla Fenton that introduce and conclude the papers are selections from an ongoing body of work in which she integrates her wrapped and stitched art with her academic studies.

We may enlighten our reading of the following papers, as well as our own research, by heeding the Turbeville admonition she quotes: "You have to pretend you never saw anything before."

Marilyn Zurmuehlen
Editor
you have to pretend you never saw anything before ... D. Turbeville