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Teaching Toward Appreciation  
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The topic of art appreciation is vast: An Internet search of *art appreciation* yielded about 3,540,000 results. The complexity of the concept of art appreciation is its overlap with related concepts of aesthetic response, art history, art criticism, art education, aesthetic education, and art museum education. Appreciation is also affected by understandings of concepts of perception, sensibility, interpretation, taste, preference, and evaluation or judgment. Appreciation is meshed with beauty and beauty to aesthetic experience. In aesthetic philosophy as well as in daily living, concepts of beauty and appreciation are applied to nature, works of art, and a wide range of artifacts.

Art appreciation is generally assumed and often explicitly claimed to be *the* desired outcome of art education. This chapter attempts to map philosophical terrains of 'art appreciation', exemplify acts of appreciation in the visual arts, briefly explore the history of teaching for art appreciation in the United States, and sample some educational strategies for appreciation. The purpose of the chapter is to expand notions of the concept of art appreciation, to devalue "disinterested" appreciation in favor of engaged appreciation, to broaden the candidates for appreciation, including an appreciation of the "interpreting-self" and the "interpreting-other," and to motivate empirical investigations of appreciation.

#### Defining Appreciation

Stein Olsen's (1988) definitional considerations of *appreciation* in the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* can be condensed to "the act of apprehending a work of art with enjoyment" (p. 66). Appreciation entails valuing, positive or negative; it is dependent on acquired perception that requires initiation and practice, training one's sensibilities, and learning how to apply apt vocabulary to distinguish aspects of what is being appreciated. Succinctly, appreciation requires knowledge. Olsen's definition is reminiscent of Harry Broudy's (1972) "enlightened cherishing"--"a love of objects and actions that by certain norms and standards are worthy of our love. It is a love that knowledge justifies" (p. 6).

#### *Aesthetic (Disinterested) Appreciation*

Concepts of appreciation and aesthetic experience have overlapped since the eighteenth century. One traditionally necessary condition of experiencing something "aesthetically" is to view it with an attitude of "disinterest," as developed by philosophers such as William Shaftesbury, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, and in the twentieth century by Clive Bell, Edward Bullough, Monroe Beardsley, and Jerome Stolnitz. Shaftesbury typifies disinterested appreciation as enjoying something for its own sake and without wanting to possess it. For Kant, disinterestedness means not caring whether the object of appreciation even exists.<sup>1</sup>

Aesthetic attitude theories conceive of aesthetic experience as an "episode of exceptional elevation wholly beyond our ordinary understanding of empirical reality" (Honderich, 1995, p. 8). An aesthetic attitude is independent of anything of utilitarian, economic value, moral judgment, or idiosyncratic personal emotions. One should view the object "for its own sake" as the purpose of art is wholly aesthetic. Proper apprehension may result in an "aesthetic experience," which is, according to Bell, "one of the most valuable things in the world" (in Wolterstorff, 2004, p. 327).

Recently, traditional aesthetic response theory is contested. George Dickie (1997), for example, offers a succinct and dismissively sarcastic summary of the concept of aesthetic experience:

The traditional picture of the aesthetic experience of a work of art goes like this: the work and the person or subject who is experiencing it are surrounded by an impenetrable, psychological wall "secreted" by the subject that experientially nullifies all relations that the work has to things outside the experience. Aspects of works of art may, and frequently do, refer, but a 'proper' subject of aesthetic experience cannot take account of such references. (p. 156)

Developments in art over the last hundred years such as Dadaism, found art, happenings, Pop Art, Fluxus, performance art, technological art, art of social protest, and conceptual art have seriously challenged traditional aesthetics. In his rejection of 'aesthetic experience,' Dickey (1997) asserts, "aesthetic experience has a sharp edge that severs the referential relation to the world beyond it" (p. 147). To Dickie, Arthur Danto (1994), and Richard Eldridge (2003), traditional aesthetic response theories "tame" art "to an idle plaything of empty pleasure" (Eldridge, 2003, p. 60). Many theorists see the philosophical claim that "art is a thing of pleasure" to be a way of simultaneously "misunderstanding, devaluing, and repressing the real cognitive, political, and spiritual insights (or wit) that art may have to offer." Eldridge argues that artists "work for the sake of ideas and insight, not absorption in form" and not for "escapist pleasure" (2003, pp. 60-61).<sup>2</sup>

### *Appreciating Nature*

Recent philosophers of nature also threaten disinterested appreciation. Historically, Donald Crawford (2001) tells us, theories of beauty in nature have centered on four aspects: the human body, natural organisms and objects, natural phenomena, and scenery. More recently, aesthetic theories of nature do not include the body. Most recently, appreciation of nature is interested rather than disinterested. Crawford offers this list of questions that introduce the breadth of possible considerations of nature with implications for appreciation:

What is it about nature and natural objects that we find aesthetically interesting or pleasing? Do we respond to beautiful animals, seashells, flowers, and scenery simply because of their color, texture, and design characteristics, or is our response guided by scientific knowledge? What part do our biological and social needs and interests play in the aesthetic appreciation of nature? How is the aesthetics of nature related to the aesthetics of fine art? Do we find nature beautiful because it resembles art, or is art beautiful because it resembles nature? How do aesthetic values form a part of contemporary environmental and ecological concerns?

(2001, p. 306)

In considering the complications of nature, Crawford (2001) offers a succinct and useful summary definition of nature and how aspects of it might be distinguished, written by Stephanie Ross:

(i) areas of unexplored wilderness (the original "given"), (ii) areas that were wilderness, have been entered, but haven't been developed, (iii) areas that have been entered, have been affected by humankind, yet remain noticeably wilder than other areas in specifiable respects, (iv) areas that have been entered, developed, but then returned to a more natural state through careful management. (in Crawford, p. 323)

Although pure nature is often the topic for dialogue, Crawford points out that little unexplored wilderness remains, and if any exists, it is probably disturbed by human intervention such as global warming. Pure nature is a possibly useful philosophical concept, but not a reality. He further complicates the notion of pure nature by citing hybridization and domestication of animals, and genetic engineering.

Some theorists devalue natural beauty on both philosophical and theological grounds. Hegel, for example, relegated natural beauty to the lowest end of his scale of expressiveness of spirit. In some cultures, religious objections to the notion of natural beauty sometimes emerge with serious consequences: because of the biblical "fall," for example, some see striking land formations, like mountains, as God's punitive response to sin. Accordingly, after expulsion from Eden, humans experienced lands resistant to agriculture and became vulnerable to natural disasters. The biblical book of Isaiah (4:4) joyously anticipates when "every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain." Isaiah sets nature and humans in conflict, and justifies humankind in radically altering nature to suit perceived human needs, even to the detriment of Earth.

Recent aestheticians (e.g., Berleant, 1997; Eaton, 1997; Carlson, 2005) hold that appreciation of nature must be informed by knowledge provided by science and ecology, rather than being merely dependent on emotion, physical involvement, and meditative reflection. We ought to be aware of "natural forces deserving of our appreciation and warranting our respect in the form of minimal interference" (Crawford, 2001, p. 309). These qualifications tie ethics to aesthetics and reject the concept of aesthetic disinterest.

*Appreciation and Knowledge*

Some fear that overanalyzing something will kill it. Nobel physicist Richard Feynman (1999), however, rebuts an artist friend who maintains that a scientist could only take apart a beautiful thing, like a flower, and not appreciate its beauty. To the contrary, Feynman argues,

I see much more about the flower than he sees. I can imagine the cells in there, the complicated actions inside which also have beauty. I mean it's not just beauty at this dimension of one centimeter, there is also beauty at a smaller dimension, the inner structure. Also the process, the fact that the colors in the flower evolved in order to attract insects to pollinate it is interesting—it means that insects can see color...a science knowledge only adds to the excitement and mystery and the awe of a flower...I don't understand how it subtracts. (p. 2)

Beliefs in the cognitive import of the arts are very old. Both Plato's (1961) and Aristotle's (1941) theories of art, for example, are embedded in their metaphysical and epistemological theories. Appreciation, both positive (Aristotle) and negative (Plato), is dependent on interpretation. Plato's critique of art is highly dependent on his ethical theory, particularly the moral consequences of a work on an audience.

#### *Appreciation and God*

Many appreciators of nature, and some of art, include notions of God in their appreciative considerations. Plato's "Form of Beauty" is located in the divine. Kant's aesthetic philosophy derives from his metaphysical beliefs, which include God's purposive system of nature, God's "unfathomably great art" (in Dickie, 1997, p. 21). Bell, the prototypical Formalist of the twentieth century, asserts that the importance of "significant form" is that through its recognition "we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything" (in Wolterstorff, p. 327).

#### *Appreciation, Ethics, and Politics*

Socially critical aesthetic theories, including feminism, multiculturalism, Orientalism, colonialism, and queer theory merge aesthetic and ethical concerns, and reject "distancing" oneself in the face of art. These theories consider all art to be subject to moral concerns and political critiques. To deny the social content of art that is expressly made as political is to miss its point.

Some skeptics of "the aesthetic" (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984) hold that concepts of aesthetic value, taste, and appreciation are the result of upper-class cultural dominance. Sociologists find correlations between elitist tastes and social class membership, reinforcing a Marxist position that such taste is "a mere epiphenomenon without objective aesthetic basis, or, more sinister, a strategy for maintaining the sharp distinction between the upper class and others" (Goldman, 2004, p. 95). Indeed, class comes to mind when reading accounts that exemplify aesthetic appreciation by many authors today who cite connoisseurs of fine wine as exemplar appreciators.

#### *Insider and Outsider Appreciation*

One consequence of aesthetic attitude theories is that they tend to encourage the perception of art apart from its origins and purposes and to see it only as form, rather than as having specific and special meaning for its makers and original users. Religious objects from different times and places, for example, are torn from their original contexts and decontextualized in museums. Art critic Thomas McEvelley (1984) negatively reviewed a "blockbuster" exhibition, *"Primitivism" in Twentieth-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, which displayed tribal works from around the world along with modern art made by Picasso and others to demonstrate affinity between the modern and "the primitive." McEvelley raised questions about the intent and execution of the show, especially the museum's decision of providing no anthropological information about the tribal objects in the exhibition, reducing them to objects for formalist contemplation. He chastised the museum for failing to show differences between the views of the tribal participant and the outside observer by "art historians, engrossed as they seem to be in the exercise of their particular expertise, the tracings of stylistic relationships and chronologies" (p. 157).

#### *Appreciating the Interpretive-self and the Interpreting-other*

Hans-Georg Gadamer, in the Hegelian tradition, asserts that responding to art is a mode of self-understanding.

Our experience of the aesthetic too is a mode of self-understanding. Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other. Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in and through it. (1998, p. 92)

Further, Gadamer argues, "the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it" (1998, p. 93).

In recent Pragmatism, Richard Rorty argues that there should be no difference between appreciating a work and using it to better one's life and to rearrange one's priorities. "Interpreting something, knowing it, penetrating to its essence, and so on are all just various ways of describing some process of putting it to work" (in Barrett, 2003, p. 221).

Concomitant with greater self-knowledge and resulting appreciation of the changing self, one can also come to better know and appreciate others through their interpretations. To read or hear others' interpretations provides the possibility of learning about those interpreters as well as the work: How they think, what they notice, what they value and why, and their views of the world.

#### Examples of Appreciation

##### *An Appreciation by a Cultural Historian*

A landscape painting serves as an example of the need to intermix ethics, aesthetics, and scientific knowledge to appreciate it as it was painted. Alexis Rockman's *Manifest Destiny* (2004) is an 8 by 24 foot mural that shows Brooklyn, New York, submerged in water in the year 5000 after three millennia of global warming. The depiction is eerily devoid of humans while new bioengineered species thrive, as do deadly viruses and bacteria that float across the flooded surface. Cultural historian Maurice Berger (2004) interpretively appreciates the painting as "haunting" and identifies it as "an amalgam of science and aesthetics" informed by the artist's consultations with "ecologists, paleontologists, biologists, archeologists, and architects to help him create an accurate rendering" (p. 8). Both the artist and the admiring critic are engaged rather than removed, distanced, or detached. Berger's vocabulary in reference to the painting includes terms with ethical connotations: "greed," "selfishness," "shortsightedness," "indifference," "ignorance," and "complacency" (p. 15). In the view of this artist and critic, to appreciate is to know and care about the world outside of the painting itself.

##### *An Appreciation by an Artist*

Andy Goldsworthy (2004), the Scottish artist who works directly in and with natural environments, recounts his struggle with a temporary piece he built in the woods--the tip of an abandoned quarried stone that he covered with torn wet red leaves--and his challenge to make the piece work in the dappled light of the forest floor: "I have learned a lot this week and have made progress in understanding a quality of light that I have never previously been able to deal with properly." After twenty-eight years, he realized that "not understanding a woodland floor on a sunny day has represented a serious gap in my perception of nature" (p. 74).

From this example we can infer that artmaking for Goldsworthy is a process of discovery and not a rendering of preconceived knowledge or experience. The artist is

making art in order to better understand what he is making art about. Through his artmaking he comes to a better understanding of an aspect of the world and how to render it in visual form. His verbal insights about light exemplify the artist's acute knowledge and appreciation of subtleties in the world, and points to properties to which we might appreciatively attend.

*An Appreciation by an Art Critic*

Art critic Richard Kalina (2002) attends closely to one of Joan Mitchell's nonobjective paintings, *George Went Swimming*. Despite its title, the painting has no recognizable subject matter. The critic describes its composition of two sections, its brushstrokes, and its colors: "...A zone of smeared blue pushes in from the upper right corner, destabilizing the composition, giving the brushwork it impinges on a frenetic quality. The painting alternates markedly between warm and cool, evoking heated air and frigid water, the weather's changeability and, by implication, restlessness and uncertainty" (p. 92). Kalina's writing exemplifies an apprehension with enjoyment that is dependent on acquired perceptual ability and an apt vocabulary (Olsen, 1998).

*An Appreciation by an Art Collector*

Steve Martin (2004), the American comedic actor, writer, and art collector recalls a drawing he acquired.

It was done in fine pencil, extreme in detail, a monochromatic rainbow of gray gradients on white paper. The picture had its heart in Surrealism, more akin to the Russian Pavel Tchelitchev than Dali, though the quality of the draftsmanship rivaled Dali at his best. The drawing was done in the early 40's, before Abstract Expressionism obliterated the art world's need for academic drawing. It had other roots too. There was something old master-ish about it, Bosch-like, reminiscent of a dark etching emerging from the style of a 16th-century obsessive... (p. 24)

Martin's appreciation demonstrates historical knowledge that he brings to inform his judgment of the drawing as "an exceptional artwork." He notices details and nuances, but while attending to the representational ability of the artist, he is not a "sucker" for skill apart from its use to express meaning.

Appreciation and Education: A Sampling

*A History of Art Appreciation in Education in the United States*

Examining the history of art teaching in the United States, Mary Anne Stankiewicz (2001) found that instruction in aesthetics, art history, and art appreciation are conflated, and that the general purpose of teaching these areas was to improve morals and manners. The development of good taste and the ability to appreciate art and nature was thought to elevate the spirit and improve the taste of the nation. Those of the middle-class are to emulate the tastes and manners of the upper-class.

Lecturers in early nineteenth century colleges taught aesthetics as moral philosophy, classical art history in classical language classes, and modern art in modern language departments. At Harvard University in 1874, Charles Elliot Norton taught art history within the humanities, with three goals: "1) to explain how the fine arts expressed the moral and intellectual conditions of past cultures; 2) to demonstrate how the barren American experience starved the creative spirit; and 3) to refine the sensibilities of Harvard men" (Stankiewicz, 2001, p. 110). The Boston Museum of Fine Art was founded

in 1870, and its goals mirrored those of the educators. Courses in the history of art became especially popular in women's colleges at this time.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, secondary school teachers taught art history and appreciation to refine young people's morals and manners. Before World War One, most high school students were upper-middle-class women, and knowledge of art history was to prepare them to become art patrons and advocates of refined culture. According to Stankiewicz (2001), "aesthetic didacticism—that is, the belief that art can teach right behavior" entered the twentieth century through texts and lectures for secondary students and those studying to be teachers based on "unquestioned assumptions of superiority and progress, a literacy of aspiration to help middle- and lower-class students emulate upper-class taste, rather than the liberating literacy of drawing or the critical literacy advocated by some art educators today" (p. 112). Knowledge of facts was expected of the students, but the most important goal was that students appreciate "the good."

With the advent of mechanical reproductions of works of art and their widespread distribution, participants in a "picture study movement" decorated schools and offered direct study of (reproductions of) works of art. From the mid 1890s to the 1920s, teachers and volunteer "picture ladies" used "masterpieces" to develop children's "character and taste" (Stankiewicz, Amburgy, & Bolin, 2004).

Within the picture study movement, Estelle Hurl (1914) offers attitudes and assumptions which prefigure recent practices. In *How to Show Pictures to Children*, Hurl poses the "first rule" of not talking down to children, especially in selecting pictures (p. 5), and choosing pictures that children like because of subject matter and narratives interesting to them. Pictures outside the range of children's interests should not be forced upon them. Although she maintains "pictures are primarily intended for pure aesthetic joy" (p. 5), that children should be taught how pictures are technically and compositionally made, that a picture may be considered "quite apart" from its subject so as to admire its composition (p. 25), she also distinguishes between "subject and art," and asserts "the word art is not a synonym for prettiness or sentimentality" (p. 23). Although influenced by Arthur Wesley Dow (1899), a formulator of "elements of art" and "principles of design," Hurl does not elevate compositional concerns above all else: "The critical analysis of a picture would be a sad process if it were the end and object of our interest" (1914, p. 25).

Hurl advocates use of images in popular magazines, prefiguring later art educators' interests in popular culture and in visual culture studies (e.g., Duncum & Bracey, 2001; Tavin, 2003). She also advocates that children write about art, as do recent art educators (e.g., Wilson, 1986; Barrett, 1994; Stout, 1995). "Picture study" advocates instrumental goals of developing character; visual culturists advocate social justice (e.g., Tavin, 2003). Current art educators have answered questions about learner's cognitive developmental abilities regarding understandings of art with implications for its appreciation (e.g., Winner, 1982; Parsons, 1987; Efland, 2004).

The majority of developmental studies, however, have been directed toward the production of art rather than its reception. Norman Freeman (2004), however, provides an overview of "pictorial reasoning" and "aesthetic reasoning" which occasionally bear on issues of interpretation and thus appreciation. Anna Kindler's (2004) overview of

developmental research touches on developments in "artistic thinking" and has implications for interpretation and appreciation, and not just production of artifacts.

*College Art Appreciation Courses*

Professors of introductory art history and appreciation courses are increasingly reexamining their practices for educational efficacy (e.g., Lindner, 2005; College Art Association, 2005). *The Cheese Monkeys*, a novel by Chipp Kidd (2001), a professor of design, describes what may be many students' unfortunate experiences in such courses. Following is an excerpt of one young man's exposure to modern art as taught by Professor Mistelle ("Misty").

During what was to become a pivotal moment for me at State, Misty put one of the silliest paintings I had ever seen up on the screen. It was of five...figures. You could tell that they were supposed to be people because they had eyes. At least three of them were female, sporting pointy boobs the shape of horizontal midget dunce caps. The one farthest to the left apparently started out as a Negro, but the artist changed his mind when he got to the neck and made the rest of her white, pink, apricot, and deep rust.

These she-things looked stunned, as if they'd just been told they all had cervical cancer. And the two on the right were racked with skin problems the likes of which I prayed I'd never know. The whole thing appeared to have been abandoned far from completion, the artist having come to his senses and taken up something less ghastly, like infanticide.

"This," Mistelle announced, "is Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* (O.J. version O). 1907." (pp. 67-68)

The professor continued his lecture, all of which merged into what the student characterized as "a continual membrane of ambiguous declaration" (p. 68). The student came to realize "something strange was happening to me. I was starting to feel ashamed... stupid." In the fictional student's experience, who was taking the elective course to appreciate modern art, he came instead to appreciate that he was an "idiot" and that modern paintings were "unknowable" (p. 68).

*Appreciation in Methods Textbooks for Teachers*

There are many well-intentioned but vague claims and exhortations in "methods" textbooks about teaching art, preschool through 12th grade. For example, early in her textbook on teaching art to elementary education students, Joan Koster (2001) writes: "Students need to learn how to appreciate art and to understand how being knowledgeable in art can enrich their lives" (p. 17). She neither explicitly explains what appreciation will entail nor how knowledge of art enriches students' lives.

Some art educators are more explicit when writing about art appreciation. In their textbook for teaching art in elementary schools, Al Hurwitz and Michael Day (1995) define art appreciation:

the word appreciate means "valuing" or having a sense of an object's worth through the familiarity one gains by sustained, guided study. Appreciation also involves the acquisition of knowledge related to the object, the artist, the materials used, the historical and stylistic setting, and the development of a critical sense. (pp. 309-310)

Hurwitz and Day connect appreciating with valuing that requires knowledge. They weaken relations of appreciating and knowing, however, when they write: "Knowledge,

however, is not a precondition for deriving pleasure from works of art--if it were, people would not collect African or Asian art or anything else about which they know little but which nevertheless has the power to capture and hold their attention" (p. 311).

The claim that making art increases one's appreciation for art is also commonplace. For example, Koster (2001) states, as if it were self-evident and without need of argumentation or evidence, "In creating their own art, students learn how artists think in the context of reflecting and analyzing their own artistic productions" (p. 434).

Hurwitz and Day (1995) explicitly promote the idea that art teachers should teach toward appreciation of art by teaching artmaking skills, but they do not assume that there is an automatic transference from students making art to students appreciating art: to attain such a goal, teachers must teach for it. In support of consciously teaching toward appreciation, the authors cite Manuel Barkan and Laura Chapman who in 1967 argued for balancing making and reflecting as mutually reinforcing, asserting that neither one is sufficient without the other.

#### *Aesthetic Education at the Lincoln Center Institute*

The Lincoln Center Institute in New York City is an example of a program developed and refined over a twenty-five year period. It is dedicated to "aesthetic education" that provides students with experiential studies of actual works of art (not reproductions), including dance, music, theater, film, visual arts, and architecture. The Institute's philosophy and practices are predominantly based on philosophical and psychological theories of Maxine Greene (2001), Howard Gardner (1999), and John Dewey (1934). The Institute's repertory from which teachers may choose changes yearly, and is broad in range, including works by the Paul Taylor Dance Company, Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night," and Alfred Hitchcock's "Notorious," among many others. The strength of the Institute is the performing arts; visual art experiences are provided by local art museums. Its philosophy is to submerge young audiences in a variety of authentic works of art that yield transformative aesthetic experiences.

#### Expanding the Boundaries of Appreciation

##### *Engaged Appreciation*

The proper place for considerations within art education of the aesthetic is currently contested. As Parsons (2005) makes clear, some art educators place it centrally (e.g., Eisner, 2002), and some toward the side (e.g., Efland, 2002). The role of the aesthetic is unresolved in visual culture literature (e.g., Tavin, 2003; Efland, 2005).

Most of the examples of appreciating artifacts and nature in this chapter require and entail engaged appreciation, rather than distancing oneself from everything but the "formal" or "aesthetic" properties of a work of art. Even appreciation of art made under Formalist theory requires knowledge of art history (Danto, 1981). To disengage from the meanings and implications of any work of art, and especially works made to be politically confrontational, is to tame them beyond recognition. A morally and ecologically sound appreciation of nature requires engaged participation. When we study visual culture it is not for the purpose of being washed over with an aesthetic glaze.

##### *A Broadened Canon*

Appreciation has been confined too narrowly to "high" or "fine" art. The canon, nevertheless, has been broadened in the past by art educators such as Estelle Hurl, Vincent Lanier (e.g., 1982) who advocated film study, June King McFee and Rogena Degge (1977) who attended appreciatively and critically in their methods book to the

built environment and different cultural groups, and Laura Chapman (1978) who, in her methods book, included discussions of a gas station, doll houses, and commercial television. Currently, art educators who advocate the study of visual culture in art education include a wide range of artifacts beyond those collected by art museums. Doug Blandy and Kristin Congdon (2005) advocate the study of kitsch, which is usually associated with bad taste, and generally avoided by art teachers.

#### *Nature and Art Education*

Charles Garoian (1998) critically considers the aesthetics of land use in art education as it should be affected by ecological understanding and care. When considering pedagogical strategies for teaching elementary school students about constructing environmental art, Karen Keifer-Boyd (2002) asks children these questions which she adopts from eco-feminists: "Where did the material originate? Are the materials biodegradable? Were any species exploited in the production of the material applied to the art process?" (p. 331).

Peter London's writing on teaching art with and about nature includes engaged concerns: "Nature Matters. The apples and pears in the still life, the model on the stand, the trees and hills are not merely bumps and depressions of hues. They are alive...they are all speaking and have things to tell us that we should attend to" (2004, p. 39).

#### *Appreciating Individual Artists and Cultural Groups*

Lawrence Weschler (1982), in his biography of Robert Irwin, offers a compelling example of all that can be learned and appreciated by seeing through the eyes of an artist, his culture, intentions, successes, frustrations, as well as his individual works of art. The title of Weschler's book, *Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees*, is a poetic variant definition of "aesthetic experience," but Weschler is clearly engaged in his appreciation of the artist and his work. The book is reminiscent of ground-breaking empirical work relevant to appreciation by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1990) on "flow."

Art educators Graeme Chalmers (2004) and Patricia Stuhr (1994), among others, advocate teaching art as a means for social change through cultural knowledge of artifacts and people who produce them. Chalmers (2004), for example, identified cultural goals for teachers of art that include "strategies that correct and redress feelings of cultural superiority," "encourage students to make art that challenges racist beliefs of individuals," and "challenge students' assumptions about people who seem 'different'" (pp. 9-10). Stuhr (1988) and Jacqueline Chanda (1993), among others, explore how indigenous peoples appreciate their artifacts.

Paul Bolin (1995) advocates study of material culture within art education, defining the term to encompass all non-natural objects. The purpose of such study is "offering interpretations about people who make, use, respond to, and preserve these artifacts" in order to "provide students with a range of ways to consider the artifact itself, and more importantly, its maker" (n. p.).

#### *Teaching for Empathic Appreciation*

Candace Stout (2001) advocates explicitly teaching art so that students care about people and the world. In building a "moral-cognitive curriculum," she is influenced especially by Maxine Greene. Stout developed and taught a course to high school students in which all learning activities were "intended to evoke empathic response to fellow human beings as well as to other creatures with whom we share this earth" (p. 84). She observed changes in her students: they showed desire to learn more about artists,

they listened to the ideas of others, showed signs of respect for difference, became more reflective, expressive, and invested with their own experiences. Stout was able to effect caring, however difficult that is to measure, by planning and teaching directly for it.

The following quotation is a specific example of the results of directly teaching for an understanding of another person by examining that person's art. Jean Giacolone, a master's student in art education, responds to a self-portrait by Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, a Cuban woman of African descent. In the large Polaroid photograph, the artist has "slimed" herself, and has these words hand-written across her chest: "IDENTITY COULD BE A TRAGEDY." After examining the photograph in an art gallery, Giacolone wrote about the picture pretending she was the skin of the subject:

I have been given too much importance in the world. I wrap this woman, warm her, and cool her. I expand with her every breath. The color I give her is from Mendel's lottery—a toss of the protean dice. She is sometimes so proud of my flawless surface and other times I feel if she had a zipper she would step right out of me, and leave me on the floor. Would she then be freer, less conflicted? I glow for her. Be proud of your heritage. If I am your identity I am only the beginning—the wrapper. When you covered me with goo, were you mocking me or paying homage to the origin of our brown-ness? I want you to come to terms with me. I will not take the fall for this—I am not your tragic flaw. (in Barrett, 2005, p. 192)

Giacolone's spontaneous writing in front of an artwork is an example of empathic interpretation and appreciation, both of an artwork and what it expresses, and of a living person who is the subject of the work.

*Art Education, the Interpretive-self, and Interpretive-communities*

While taking an art education course on teaching criticism and aesthetics, upon request of the instructor, a student pretended to be some specific thing in a painting and to express insights about the painting from her assumed perspective. Shari chose to be a small tree hanging off the edge of a high cliff in a Chinese landscape painting, and wrote about the landscape as if she were the tree. When she read her paragraph aloud to the class, Shari's voice faltered. "When reading this aloud I almost started to cry. I realized I was writing about myself." Shari is a survivor of a life-threatening form of cancer.

I wrote my interpretation as the tree clinging to the cliff. When I read it, the tree was not speaking any longer. I was. No one else listening would understand what it had become for me, but it changed and I had to acknowledge the power of this discovery. By tapping into a place I like to keep at bay, the examination of this painting unleashed a truth that is uniquely mine and painful to explore. I was forced to see my fear, and for the first time to admit that I don't fully believe I have left it behind. It exists in places and things I can't escape and perhaps I'm not supposed to. (personal communication, fall 2004)

Through interpretation of a landscape Shari better knows herself, and when she shares her insight others can experience a person being vulnerably human.

#### Conclusions

Appreciation is a complex act of cognition that is dependent on relevant knowledge of what is appreciated. Full appreciation involves engagement with what is appreciated, and such engagement involves knowledge of various sorts, including

emotion that informs knowledge (Scheffler, 1991). Appreciation ought not be set apart from moral implications of what is being appreciated. Distanced versus engaged appreciation need not be an either-or choice: both can provide useful lenses toward understanding (Brand, 1998), but distanced appreciation is insufficient. Appreciation results from an act of judgment, and a responsive judgment (positive or negative) is dependent on an interpretation. Any interpretation is "preformed, prejudiced, interested, partial, horizontal, incapable of reaching any straightforwardly neutral or objective account of what is interpreted" (Honderich, 1995, p. 13).

Appreciation within art education is too narrowly focused on fine art and ought to be broadened to include nature as environment, artifacts of more kinds, individuals who make and perform, and cultural influences on the makers' expressive activities. Appreciation might also include knowledge of the appreciating-self and the appreciating-other who publicly expresses her or his observations. Because appreciations are prejudiced, interested, and partial, by examining what and why we value, we can learn about ourselves and others and if, how, and why values differ.

Appreciation ought not be assumed to be a natural and inevitable outcome of art education. If it is important to teachers, teachers ought to design their curricula so that appreciation is taught for and assessed (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Making something does not necessarily result in appreciation, and when an artmaking experience is negative, artmaking may result in acquisition of negative attitudes. When making-experiences are positive for the makers, this does not guarantee their appreciation of other things of that kind, nor transfer of that specific appreciation to all things.

Appreciation is a complex phenomenon deserving of continued research about if, when, and how learners achieve appreciation in their present lives, what and who they appreciate, and if it lasts through their lifetimes. Such investigations ought to include philosophical clarifications of what counts as appreciation, appreciation within visual culture studies, anthropological studies of indigenous appreciators, historical studies of international education and appreciation, concepts of appreciation in disciplines other than art, cognitive studies of appreciating individuals and groups, case studies of schools and programs claiming appreciation as an outcome, issues of appreciation and social change, and longitudinal studies to assess life-long learning that continues to result in appreciations of newly experienced objects, events, and people.

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<sup>1</sup> For overviews of theories of aesthetic experience, see relevant entries in the *Encyclopedia of aesthetics* (1998). New York: Oxford. See also any of a number of anthologies of aesthetic philosophy such as those edited by Carolyn Korsmeyer (1998), Peter Kivy (2004), and David Goldblatt & Lee Brown (2005).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the contested concept of aesthetic experience, see Richard Shusterman (1997), a current Pragmatist philosopher who is aware of the concept's limitations but who argues for its relevance. See also Gary Iseminger's (2003) discussion of the strengths and weakness of the concept, which includes overviews of current debates between Shusterman, Dickie, and other contemporary theorists.