

ARTLAB: THE ART OF DIALOGUE, DIALOGUE AS ART

By

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B.F.A, Savannah College of Art and Design, 1992

An Applied Project Submitted to the Lamar Dodd School of Art of The

University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ART EDUCATION

ATHENS, GA

2006

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12/5/06

DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Richard Siegesmund, Dr. Tracie Costantino, and Mark Callahan for excellent guidance through and support for this project

Dr. Bonnie Cramond

Steven Thompson for encouraging in me the spirit of discovery

My wife Elizabeth and daughter Clare for selflessly allowing me time to complete this text

Madeline Darnell and the Lyndon House Community Arts Center for allowing me use of their facilities.

...and thank you, Mom and Dad.

“It is the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its myriad meanings and makes it marvelous to us, and sets it in some new relation to the age, so that it becomes a vital portion of our lives...”

- Oscar Wilde

“The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contributions to the creative act.”

-Marcel Duchamp

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FORWARD

In July of 2006 I conducted a ten-day seminar on contemporary art for teenagers. The course was engineered as a discussion group that included studio production, with class time being split between the two focus areas. The contemporary art course, called "Artlab" was also a research project I had designed. As a teacher research project, Artlab was intended to provide useful data that might suggest a connection between discussion and the development of certain traits of creativity as defined by E. Paul Torrance. Following a simple rubric, I hoped to chart the progress of the traits as they appeared within the dialogue and the completed studio work. I expected to find increasing evidence of the traits in participant's artwork, and that these increases would be comparable to those observed during discussion. In other words, if during a discussion someone began to exhibit an increase in "elaboration" (one of the targeted traits), I might expect to see an increase in his or her ability to elaborate upon a visual idea as well. While I did see some evidence of increases in certain targeted areas, I was not able to attribute them convincingly to the group discussions. Still, the associations between the two focus areas appeared strong to me, and I began looking closer at the data I had collected.

As I pored over audio recordings of ten days worth of conversation, I became more and more fascinated by the structure of the dialogue we had created as a group. Within it, I observed various connections being made; themes developed, running jokes carried along. To me the interconnected, permeable qualities of the discussions began to resemble temporary structures, like masses of bubbles. The more I investigated the recordings, the more I wanted to categorize themes and recognize connections. From

these investigations, a new focus began to emerge; I was seeing my targeted creative traits mirrored by the conversation as a whole. As the group's conversations developed, each to some extent built upon the former and contributed to the next. Certainly, the development of traits like "Elaboration" and "Flexibility" could be tracked by observing and taking part in a dialogue.

Of particular interest to me was the way my curriculum and its resulting discussions mirrored the creative qualities I was looking for in the participants' responses. These ongoing changes in the curriculum and dialogue as the course progressed began to capture my interest more and more as I reviewed the data. Recurring themes were elaborated upon, and applied to new situations. The dialogue was flexible; it could tolerate deviations, sidetracks, or wanderings without losing its surface tension.

As we met more often, the fluency of the dialogue increased as participants became more familiar with the vernacular of the course. In a way, the dialogue's "body" was very original and localized. Since group members were encouraged to contribute content daily by offering to "recap" questions from previous sessions, dialogue constantly rebuilt itself, while strengthening the group's overall understanding of a given topic. As I kept track of these changes, I became more and more interested in how they contributed to the overall body of the dialogue itself. It seemed sessions were most successful so long as Artlab viewed itself as a democratic group of contributors. Soon I made a connection between what I had witnessed during Artlab, and a current cultural development: the "WIKI". A Wiki is a type of website that allows visitors to edit the content of the site. Wikis promote collaboration, in that a community of users can contribute to a common, and presumably positive goal. A current large-scale example of

this application is the online encyclopedia known as “Wikipedia”. A community of individual users maintains the site, all of which lend their particular area of knowledge to the whole (Cunningham, 2002). Once an entry has been submitted to the community, various editors pore over the content, and it is subsequently approved, denied or labeled “under dispute”.

“Free culture is a creative society in which every individual has a freedom to create and since creativity requires inspiration and inspiration comes from other creations, freedom to build upon creations of others. Every single one of us has a certain level of creativity that blurs the distinction we are used to today, a line between creators and users (consumers). Most of the people aren't "consumers" in its full sense. Most of the people will contribute to the society if they are only given a chance, a freedom to do so - a freedom to copy, use, study, share and build upon” (Free Culture Philosophy, 2006).

Artlab’s curriculum enjoyed the ability to take on the contributions of individual members and allow them to tailor the course. Adjustments to Artlab grew beyond the natural change of topics during a conversation; I got into the habit of researching emerging themes in order to reexamine them during the next day’s class. Topics that were worked into the course included: a brief history of Artemisia Gentileschi, The “Winchester House”, and a comparison of the exhibitions “Body Worlds” and “La Specola”. Sometimes these contributions became running themes that were weighed against previous discussions, or used to illustrate emerging topics.

The emerging themes spurred a new direction in the research: that by assessing aesthetic dialogue as a creative act I might illustrate the ways in which it brings about a

deep understanding of and involvement in artistic works. The resulting assessment of the Artlab dialogues includes breakdowns of the original research goals, but goes beyond them to explore the ways each participant added to the growing organism that was our dialogue.

CHAPTER I

Motivating factors

The term 'Aesthetics' can be understood as a branch of philosophy that ponders questions about the nature of art. Many qualities of art are examined aesthetically: what makes something art? How do we judge beauty? What exactly are we judging when we experience a work of art? The field of aesthetics encompasses all aspects of art, from the merits of the artist to the context from which the art is understood. Because the study of aesthetics is a philosophical pursuit, it is composed largely of questions, not answers. It is my belief that by considering these kinds of questions people can come to a deep understanding of art and their relationship to it. This deeper understanding might affect creative production in a measurable way. Fittingly, the idea for researching an aesthetics course emerged from a desire to address a pair of my own questions: 1) How will dialogue about art inform or enhance art production, and 2) How will creative problem solving be effected by discussions during the course?

These two main questions grew from a long-standing, larger pedagogical concern of mine: many people seem ill prepared to connect with art in a meaningful way. Art critic Mara Tapp suggests this is due to Western cultural trends that dismiss intellectual pursuits: "...the late Indian Statesman Jawaharlal Nehru said, "The art of a people is a true mirror to their minds." And without art that mirror turns dark, the mind atrophies, and a culture goes bankrupt. Remember what Pablo Picasso said of painting: "It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the coming brutality and darkness"

(Tapp, 2001). I believe it is the duty of art educators to encourage students to seek relevance in art. By doing so, we will develop and sustain a society that values creative expression.

My first semester of graduate study at The Lamar Dodd School of Art in the University of Georgia was the catalyst that helped me connect creative development and dialogic techniques. I took two courses during that time that greatly influenced my approach to the program: *Aesthetics and Society* and *Contemporary Art Seminar*. The course on aesthetics and society connected contemporary art thinking with social issues and themes. Aside from being an informative and lively course, it held an added bonus- it was taught by a professor of art education.

During the course I began to see pedagogical opportunities in aesthetic discussion. Furthermore, I became convinced of the need for such learning in schools. Before I took the course, I was largely unaware of any efforts to include aesthetics in the K-12 classroom, to say nothing of serious discussion about art after 1960. Contemporary Art Seminar similarly influenced me. I found the class to be highly stimulating and unusual, and the idea that I might teach a class by adapting the professor's approach held great appeal for me.

When I enrolled in the course, I expected the usual slide-and-lecture format common to art history courses. Instead, I soon realized the course was grounded in dialogic inquiry. The instructor, Steven Thompson, directed discussions based upon readings that addressed issues related to contemporary art either directly or indirectly. One week we read Oscar Wilde's *The Critic As Artist*, another week it was Clement Greenberg's attack of Philip Guston after he abandoned abstract expressionism. Each

class period we would discuss our thoughts about the readings, and apply them to our understanding of contemporary art. I found the mix of reading selections sometimes esoteric but highly stimulating. The readings were chosen for their potential for discussion. Every piece held enough substance to provoke conversation or healthy debate.

Throughout the course students were to develop two projects. One was an interview assignment. Students were encouraged to interpret the assignment broadly, and to step outside comfort areas to explore unfamiliar topics. The resulting projects were varied and captivating. One student entered a demolition derby; another compiled a photo essay on the completion of a public decorative sculpture. Yet another student interviewed convenience store clerks and parking deck attendants. The other project assigned to the class was to complete an art project. This project could be anything, so long as it was not a continuation of the student's current studio direction.

This exercise in divergent thinking brought mixed results in the way of successful finished work, but was highly effective as a way to explore possibilities free from self-imposed constraints. The final results of the projects were compelling, though most were not polished or completely realized. It is important to keep in mind that more weight was given to the student's willingness to "go out on a limb" conceptualizing the project than to the formal qualities of the finished work. To supplement the preliminary research for this project, I returned to Thompson's class four times as a visitor, taking notes on the reading or media materials and general topics of discussion. The following are samples of field notes that I took during my first visit:

- ...Students discussed their project ideas. As they described their proposed projects, Thompson supplemented the ideas with suppositions and references to other ideas from literature, science, and art.
- (Thompson appeals to the students to turn in strong, well thought out projects. He explains that the projects should be thought of as research for the sake of personal exploration.... an attempt to create a situation where new investigations happen)
- As students briefly describe their project ideas, he questions them further, suggesting different approaches, and encouraging them to develop their ideas in new directions. He checks for agreement and understanding periodically. In these conversations, Thompson allows for what I would term “constructive digression”. Constructive digression is intellectual meandering that allows interesting connections to the original subject to emerge. He encourages these “cul-de-sacs” off the main road (his expression).

These notes point to techniques Thompson employed to bring out deep exploration of issues connected with contemporary and historical themes. It should be noted that the class sometimes dissolved into debate. During those times dialogue became clouded by strong feelings, and the atmosphere of the class was altered. This must be a difficult course of dialogue to maintain- discussing matters of aesthetic value without disputing taste.

A final note on what I found intriguing about Thompson’s class: His way of incorporating strands of contemporary thinking, in the form of poetry, academic journal essays, of discussion of popular culture phenomena had the effect of addressing the

currents that shape contemporary art. Instead of examining a micro-section of an art world trend, he attempted to reveal its sources from historical and current perspectives. This willingness to “zoom out” and take in the larger view added much to the depth of his class (see Addendum for more complete notes on Thompson’s class).

The Artlab project came about in part through my interest (as a student of art education) in the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) model. Discipline-Based Art Education was developed as an approach to education that broke with the traditions of art education at the time, namely those of the self-expressive movement. One purpose of DBAE was to secure for the arts a place in education equal to other disciplines (Eisner, 1987). DBAE declared that art is a subject like other subjects taught in school, and as such can be subjected to the same types of evaluation and predictable student output as math, science, etc. The resulting guidelines provided art educators with clear and concise descriptions of four separate disciplines that comprise the study of art. Under DBAE aesthetics and criticism, the notable additions, were considered equally important as production or history (Smith, 1987, 1989). The inclusion of aesthetics as a definable topic for study was a significant development in art education. With this specific inclusion of aesthetics art educators were charged with giving students critical intellectual means to understand the visual art of their own period (Fehr, 1997).

I first became aware of DBAE when I began my graduate studies. I was immediately attracted to the idea of a well-defined art education approach that included aesthetics and criticism as equal components. As I moved through the course of study my interest in those two quadrants of DBAE grew. As I investigated DBAE further, I found it to be an appropriate means to achieve my educative goal of connecting students

with art of their time. As I will discuss, I also found issues with the way DBAE can be interpreted.

The art education model outlined by DBAE is comprised of four focus areas: criticism, history, aesthetics, and production (Dobbs, 1992). Half of the DBAE model deals with philosophical issues connected to art (criticism and aesthetics). If one is to commit to the DBAE model, it is easy to understand how discussion might be employed as an educational strategy. As an educator dealing in highly subjective subject matter such as aesthetic taste, discussion seems a natural fit.

Art education has been connected to higher order thinking skills (Eisner, 1998). Higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking have to do with evaluating the worth of ideas. Critical thinking as defined by Michael Scriven and Richard Paul (for the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction) includes many areas of intellectual exploration that are well-suited for discussion: Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (Scriven & Paul, 2004). Critical thinking is a way to soundly assess a concept, object, or creative outcome. It is a decoding skill that depends on inquiry and attention, and can be applied in real world experiences (Dorn, 1995).

To apply critical thinking is to exercise higher-order thinking skills. It is a way to assess the object of inquiry as well as the self (Freedman, 2003). What better way of communicating these qualities of thought is there than discussion? I would argue that without effective use of discussion, the subject of aesthetics is impossible to teach

effectively. Furthermore, since aesthetic taste is related to creative output (i.e. color or technique choices) it becomes a critical part of production as well.

Discussion is a natural way of expressing the sorts of reasoning used in critical aesthetic analysis and aesthetic taste. Students may fail to connect meaning with art if they lack opportunities to develop useful strategies and knowledge bases for doing so.

Eisner states:

“If educators do not allow sufficient space in the day for students to explore the world in their own way using the capacities that suite them best they miss out on a whole form of experiencing that will be necessary for them to attain a high quality of life when they graduate. Students need to be able to make value judgments and to discern what is important for them with regard to quality of life. These concerns led me to conduct teacher research in the form of a discussion group that focused on contemporary art themes” (Eisner, 2002, pp. 70-92).

Methodology

Participants

Participants were five high school aged students (two male, three female) ranging in age from 14 to 16 years old, who returned parental consent, internet safe use, and minor assent forms granting me permission to collect data during the two week course at the Lyndon House Community Arts Center, an extension of the county’s Leisure Services Department (IRB approval forms can be found in the Addendum). The Lyndon House is a local art hub. It is well funded and enjoys the support of the local community. It hosts art-based workshops held during intercession periods for elementary and middle schools, and takes advantage of a partnership with the University of Georgia

art education program. I designed the course, entitled “Artlab” as a seminar that focused on current thinking and production in the fine arts. I also acted as instructor during the duration of the course. Artlab was part of a summer art “camp” at the Lyndon House, and was advertised as “...a discussion and art making course about contemporary art.”

Local newspapers carried ads for the course, and information was posted on the Lyndon House web site. Additionally, local high school art teachers were given literature about the program to post and distribute to interested students.

Students came to the group from the immediate college town and surrounding areas. Originally seven participants signed up for the course. Two students dropped due to scheduling conflicts. I retained data from on of the students who dropped because I felt extracting her contributions to the dialogue would cause confusion during data analysis. Of the five core participants, all but one were Caucasian. There was one African-American group member. Since the program was not affiliated with the public school system group members were not required to volunteer any personal information. Additionally no school records, IEPs, etc. could be made available to me. Consequently, much of the participants’ histories were unknown to me. Rather than make any assumptions about members’ intelligence, lifestyles, or backgrounds I have included only information volunteered to me by the participants during the study.

Conditions

For two weeks (ten days) I mediated a discussion group that focused on contemporary art topics during two and a half hour blocks of instruction time. The instructional time was sometimes divided between studio production (art making) and discussion. Studio time was held in a room designated for drawing and painting, while

discussions were held in a small room with chairs, tables, and audio/video equipment. Instructional time was not always divided evenly between discussion and production. During the course, teaching assistants were available and sat in during discussions and studio time.

Data Sources

Audio recordings

Discussion and critique sessions were digitally recorded using a video camera with the lens cap left on. The digital recordings were transferred daily to a computer, where they were converted into digital audio files. The audio files were “burned” onto CDs that were kept in a locked box along with the original camera tapes.

Questionnaires

Participants answered pre and post course questionnaires. The questionnaires sought information about the students’ previous art experiences, attitudes toward contemporary art, and reflections about the course.

Course packs

Participants were given bound copies of the course reading material used as prompts for each day’s discussion.

Observations

I took daily notes throughout the course based on my observations in class. Often these observations were focused on topics of conversation or attitudinal changes during instructional time. These notes were typically used to shape the course of the following day’s discussion.

CHAPTER II

Approaches to aesthetic discussion

Aesthetic discussion provides ample opportunity for young people to work out the big issues of art that exist beyond its surfaces. When first encountering a sculpture or painting, a person may first ask; “what am I looking at?” To use an example from Artlab, let’s say the observer is looking over Chris Burden’s installation “*When Robots Rule: The Two Minute Airplane Factory*”(1999). The artwork in this case is a bare-bones mechanical apparatus that assembles and launches rubber band powered airplanes into the gallery space every two minutes. The observer first encounters this work in terms of its physical qualities. Perhaps the person then searches through his or her knowledge base of materials and surfaces, and comes to a reasonable conclusion: it’s a huge metal machine that cranks out toy planes assembly-line style. There are numerous aesthetic qualities in Burden’s work to be explored on the surface, to be sure. However, investigation needs to continue if we value a deeper understanding of how the object functions as a work of art. The viewer may ask himself, “Well, what does it mean?” or “Why did somebody bother to make something like this?” He or she may also begin to relate the experience to any number of other stored memories. Perhaps the viewer then begins to make metaphorical associations to what is being experienced. This is in line with cognitive theories that define thought as a complex overlapping of concepts rooted in experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999).

It may be that while experiencing art, we are exercising our cognitive ability to associate, integrate, and recall information. This information may then be applied to our understanding of the work. The cognitive ability to connect themes in this way identifies the viewer as one who constructs meaning (Freedman, 2003). It's my opinion that understanding of art begins when the observer seeks out the answers to questions that arise from an art experience. Without this sense of relevance, understanding can become too insular, and therefore lacks the depth required for a meaningful connection. This is something to be aware of when teaching an art lesson.

In *Teaching Visual Culture*, Kerry Freedman writes that “[The] formalist model of aesthetics appears only to facilitate an analysis of what is contained within a work of art, it has actually conditioned students to approach visual culture as a series of objects isolated from larger social meanings” (Freedman, p. 27, 2003). Freedman criticizes the formalist tendency to eschew context for a more phenomenological approach. She also finds fault with the modernist assumption that all information needed to interpret art is contained within the work itself (Freedman, 2003). While Freedman acknowledges the contribution of DBAE to aesthetic education, she disparages some critical approaches associated with its design; especially those she believes limit the influence of outside contexts.

Edmund Feldman developed a criticism model known as “the Feldman Method” which is associated with the development of DBAE. Feldman breaks down the process of criticism into steps: Describe, Analyze, Interpret, Judge. One interpretation of this model is that all the steps must relate to inherent qualities of the art, and not allow outside contexts. Such criticism may be due in part to Feldman's choice of formalism as his

'first ground of judgment' (Feldman, 1994). However, the real problem may exist more in interpretation of the method than the method itself. Feldman's method can fail to link art and social contexts if art educators don't encourage students to seek out those connections. Like DBAE, the Feldman method is subject to the influence of the many educators who use it in their classes. If interpreted as a lock-step routine that ends in the teacher summing up a work for the class, Feldman's model may indeed have a "conditioning effect". However, when the method fully engages the class in each step, and does not rush to judgment, it can be an effective analytical tool. Students need to develop the ability to connect themselves with artist's rationale for making works of art, as well as come to an understanding of its formal qualities. Without this understanding viewers are limited to what they see, and may not move beyond any preexisting knowledge with which to connect the experience (and so build upon knowledge bases). Dewey noted: "...a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent" (Dewey, 1934, p.54).

To illustrate the need for richer understanding in the art class room, I offer the following observation: While visiting a fourth grade art room I noticed two students who off-handedly dismissed art work presented them for a lesson. The negative attitude of each was directed toward a work of modern or contemporary art. The two students were attempting to explain what the teacher meant by the term "Op-art". The first student responded by announcing that it was when an artist "makes a dot on a blank piece of paper, and then says (with a grandiose gesture)'that's *art*'." The second student described the term by calling it 'modern, or crazy art'. It wasn't as though the students

were not interested in the lesson; the trouble was in their cynical reactions. I guessed the students were voicing instilled cultural attitudes or stereotypes about contemporary art. I also noticed that the teacher allowed these remarks to go by without further discussion. Instead, she went along with her lesson, wherein students were to draw an insect from a book, then surround the image with repeating sets of lines. It was not the way the lesson introduced the concept of Op-art that was troubling- works associated with it are usually understood to be based in optical sensation. The problem was that negative perceptions already in place concerning the validity of art went unquestioned. Judging by their responses, the students understood only the visual requirements of the lesson. The rest of their understanding came from limited experience. When they applied the two, they arrived at a rudimentary (and negative) conclusion: op-art is crazy, or a scam.

It is my feeling that discussion about the artist's reasons for doing, beyond a desire to provoke sensory stimulation, was in order. Without a knowledge base from which to draw references, much of contemporary art may indeed appear crazy. Knowledge bases can be constructed through research, dialogue, and instruction as well as visual experience. Once we become familiar with a subject, we can begin to apply the knowledge to new experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

Traits in aesthetic understanding

Meaningful art experiences may be enhanced by traits E. Paul Torrance sought in his *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking* (TTCT). Traits Torrance connects to creative output are: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration (Ball & Torrance, 1984, Millar, 2002). Without fluency or elaboration, the observer has difficulty translating the message being broadcast. Without the ability to decode the messages art is sending, the

viewer cannot connect what he or she knows to what the artist knows, and loses interest. The message, once decoded, is placed into some context that makes sense to the viewer (elaboration). Without flexibility, an observer will not seek relevance in the unfamiliar. Perhaps originality plays the important part of generating in the viewer a desire to seek out and recognize novel solutions.

There is no magic formula for reaching an understanding of art. Sometimes the only clues we bring to an art experience are the contexts in which it is viewed. Once we commit to an art experience, and give ourselves over to curiosity or sensation, half the job has been done. If we allow our investigations to continue from there, we stand to be rewarded with a wealth of information. Naturally, as some questions are answered more crop up, and all the while we are learning. Aesthetic dialogue (which is rooted in curiosity—which may also be called a willing suspension of judgment— and an active attention to sensation) is a way for people to raise questions, make connections, and voice opinions in a social setting. I suggest that once a person satisfies their curiosity in such a setting, they have begun to take on ownership of their understanding. They have consciously arrived at a conclusion by their own efforts. Aesthetic conversation and criticism deal largely with matters of taste (i.e. personal preference). Education that attempts to teach students what to like may keep them from coming to their own conclusions, and thereby establishing a personal stake in their education.

The art classroom offers many unique learning opportunities. One distinct opportunity comes from the chance it gives students to cultivate their own creative opinions. Philosophical questions have no fixed or “right” answers, so critical

discussions of art can give students a sense of ownership without the pressure of high-stakes problems.

Theoretical framework

The original theoretical framework for this project operates under the assumption that creativity is a generally occurring phenomenon that can be enhanced. It also assumes that the targeted cognitive skills constitute creative behavior. Although there is no unified theory of creativity, this view is shared by several theorists (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, Amabile, Sternberg, Torrance in Sternberg, 1999).

Some creativity theorists view the creative process as existing in distinct stages. For example, Wallas divided creative thinking into the steps of *preparation*, *incubation*, *illumination*, and *verification* as a way to identify what happens along the way to novel solutions (Martindale in Sternberg, 1993). Since the definition of ‘product’ or outcome of creative thought can be defined rather broadly (Csikszentmihaly, 1996), one is compelled to view creativity as a cognitive process. A creative solution is brought into physical reality only after being shaped, refined, or otherwise manipulated by the creator’s internal methods for solving the initial problem. When we concentrate on features of the internal creative process instead of the final product, we can associate it with aesthetic thinking about subjects such as art.

Answers to the question “Who is creative?” are historically and culturally varied. Often one finds the focus of research has been fixed on exceptional giftedness. Creativity exists in minor and major manifestations. Typically, the more minor the instance, the fewer the judges. Fewer people will assess the end product, and on a scale that is not

high-stakes. 'Creative' doesn't mean the same as 'exceptional', although the terms can become interchangeable. Exceptional solutions to problems are typically viewed as creative.

However, it may serve the purposes of an art education curriculum well to allow the definition of creativity certain flexibility and a more universal scope. In order to do so, I will describe the creative person as "one who expresses his or her ideas by seeking meaningful, personal solutions to problems". These meaningful solutions are the result of thinking about problems in a way that is personally connected to the individual. To frame creativity in this way allows us to see art education as a place of creative investigation within one's own abilities. There are theorists who emphasize personal (individual) construction of meaning, and believe in a wide distribution of creativity. Examples of this thinking can be found in Mihaly Csikszentmihaly's notion of creativity as a kind of transcendent state of "flow", Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and Kasimerez Dabrowski's Development Potential, all of which position creativity as a universal phenomenon (Rothenberg & Hausmann, 1954, Sternberg, 1999). Maslow's SA (self actualizing) creativeness is also related to the idea of creativity being potentially universal (Rothenberg & Hausmann, 1954).

Dabrowski bestowed significance upon the potentiality of creativity. It makes sense that potential precedes its development; creativity does not appear fully formed out of thin air. Furthermore, where education of children is the issue, creative potential is more in abundance than creative output (Runco, 2003). This premise would serve art education programs wishing to impact every possible student. This concept helped spur on the original research idea for this project; creative potential is universal, and can be

developed. A meta-analysis that focused on programs designed to enhance creativity suggests that many have been largely successful. The programs that displayed success tended to implement strategies that were aimed at the development of cognitive skills and heuristics involved in skill application (Scott, Leritz & Mumford, 2004).

Creativity may be abundant or scarce from person to person, solution to solution, but it is present during any problem solving when the self takes ownership of the solution. It is this knowledge that should inform art education that seeks to develop creative potential. It's reasonable to assume that creativity (or creative potential) can be nurtured and developed. It would not be easy to try and "teach" the mechanics of creativity and expect testable results, although people can be shown how to recognize creative qualities in themselves, and choose whether to utilize them. I think this is part of the art educator's job, rather than to try and crank out competent artists. However, it's my belief that teaching contemporary art is ideally suited for building curriculum designed to develop creative thinking—rather than artistic products—in students.

The E Paul Torrance Test For Creative Thinking

The target skills Artlab was to spotlight were first defined by Guilford to describe ways people arrive at novel solutions (Sternberg&O'Hara in Sternberg, 1999). E. Paul Torrance later adapted the same traits for use in his well-known and widely used Test for Creative Thinking (TTCT) (Sternberg & Lubart in Sternberg, 1999). The traits the TTCT is designed to look for can be applied to different aspects of creative ability. They can be general or specifically apply to particular domains.

The TTCT was developed in 1966 to recognize creativity in the test takers. It has been administered to people of numerous ages and cultural backgrounds- something that speaks to its perceived universality. The test is still in use by corporations as well as learning institutions that value creative ability. It is the most widely used creativity test. The TTCT tests for creative thinking in two areas: figural and verbal. In the TTCT they are norm- referenced measures, and subjects are scored according to their ability to display 4 creative strengths within the skills. The skills are:

Flexibility-this term refers to the participant's ability to generate a variety of ideas. It is also used to describe the ability: "tolerance of ambiguity". In dialogue, if a participant is capable of following changes in direction within the conversation, can accept or tolerate unfamiliar views, he or she is exhibiting tolerance of ambiguity. In the studio setting, this trait has to do with willingness on the part of the participant to "push" ideas beyond the familiar. It can be a step toward the generation of original ideas.

Fluency-This term describes the frequency of ideas relevant to the creative problem. In dialogue when a participant makes connections between topics, uses recently acquired vocabulary or draws appropriately from an existing knowledge base he is demonstrating Fluency.

Originality-This term pertains to novelty of solutions. In dialogue, I also use it to describe an inventive development in the conversation. If a given subject sparks exploration of a new, unforeseen topic, the group member who introduced it has exhibited originality.

Elaboration- This term describes the ability to expand or build upon an idea.

For this project I omitted a trait from the figural portion of the TTCT: Abstractness of Title. It was removed because of its specific relationship to the figural test. The remaining traits are flexible enough to be applied to both dialogue and production.¹ In fact, both portions of the TTCT look for the same traits. The difference between the two is the use of more specific language (the figural looks for “resistance to closure” and “tolerance of ambiguity” - terms that refer to Elaboration and Flexibility). These are specific skills that guided the construction of Artlab’s curriculum and assessment of student performance.

Insight and divergent thinking

Creative individuals employ divergent thinking. Divergent thinking involves the combination of unlike scenarios or concepts to arrive at new solutions to a problem. It is “the thinking that flows outward from a concept, making contact with other ideas and possibilities that one might not ordinarily consider” (Finke, in Sternberg & Davidson, 1994).

The Torrance Test for Creative Thinking (TTCT) looks for evidence of divergent thinking (Torrance, 1988). “Tolerance of ambiguity” and “resistance to closure” are traits related to divergent thinking. Both of these traits specifically have to do with the process of invention. Tolerance of ambiguity has to do with an individual’s ability to work through problems with unfamiliar features or unconventional aspects. Resistance to closure refers directly to the completion of line drawing exercises in the TTCT. If a

¹ Dr. Bonnie Crammond of the Torrance Center for Creativity, University of Georgia, confirmed the potential for the TTCT traits to be applied to these research criteria.

subject shows evidence in his or her drawing of a willingness to explore possibilities other than the obvious solution, they are exhibiting resistance to closure.

The concept of resistance to closure can be expanded to describe an attitude of mind that is open to multiple solutions. In the TTCT and in studies like Finke's, which looks for evidence of insight, (Finke in Sternberg & Davidson, 1994) "pre-inventive forms" are used. These prompts are rudimentary information given to the test subject through which innovative results are expected. Pre-inventive forms in the TTCT are partially finished line drawings in amorphous, ambiguous shapes. Finke uses basic geometric shapes that represent physical forms that the subject arranges into hypothetical objects of use. Creative activities like those sought by Torrance or Finke can be found in other theorist's work under different names (for example: Lumsden uses the terms *mutation*, *recombination*, and *migration*) (Sternberg, 1994).

Thus far, I have been presenting Torrance's traits as they can be applied to artistic production. I define artistic production much the way it is intended in DBAE- the act of making art. This includes the manipulation of media to arrive at an image or artifact: drawing or painting for example. While I suggest that the dialogue itself is a kind of creative act, I separate it from production in order to make a distinction between two different, but related, areas of creativity. *Creative problem solving* is a term I use more broadly. Creative problem solving refers to the application of creative thinking to any problem, be it during the physical manipulation of material to an expressive end, or the internal cognitive process of comparing qualities, etc.

Such cognitive activities as re-imagining, confronting the unfamiliar, or combining unlike elements are familiar to me as an artist. In my experiences they are

components of good studio practice; the traits are examples of what happens in an art studio when an artist is working with new ideas, or in a museum when a visitor is confronted with a challenging artwork.

In this applied project I connect the methods of testing for perceived creative traits and methods of artistic production for good reason. I believe that investigative approaches to art production and interpretation can help students develop deeper relationships with the art they produce and encounter. Each student will arrive at their own conclusions to the challenges of an art project, using their individual strengths and motivations.

A survey of critical thinking abilities

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze, appraise, and select between the choices generated by diverse, creative thinking. An action study of a Northern Illinois elementary school by a university student team revealed a lack of problem-solving, decision-making and metacognitive skill among a class of 26 sixth-grade students (Woodman, 1996). Pretests and post intervention data suggest that these weak skills can be improved through the arts. The study strongly suggests that 1) students are able to improve critical thinking skills and metacognitive skills through art and art criticism 2) the art room can maintain the kind of atmosphere required to promote such skills 3) higher-order thinking skills are a recognized need.

This intervention is largely based on the assumption that instruction in art and art criticism helps develop creative thinking that allow students to develop multiple possibilities and make choices. The study calls this application of creative thinking

critical thinking. Such a small study can't speak for a nation full of schools, but it does offer compelling data that can be seen as supportive of art education, and supports the underlying curriculum theory behind Artlab.

Divergent Thinking in Contemporary Art

Contemporary art is particularly well suited for lessons that promote divergent thinking, and lead to critical thinking. This is because currently our perception of art can frame broad concepts yet exists within such nuanced criteria; it can seem at once utterly elusive and all pervasive. It embodies a confluence of cultural and philosophical currents from which the artist is free to sample.

There is currently room enough for innumerable viewpoints, perspectives, or backgrounds to inform art production, to say nothing of technique, style or form. Many artists working today actively explore the elasticity inherent in the language of art. Assemblage of material and ideas drawn from various contexts and the contingency of meaning are current art world issues. Clearly, art today exists in innumerable forms. All forms (painting, video, performance, environmental, etc.) are considered equally valid. Not only that, but the various modes by which we come to know our culture have become interchangeable. Popular culture can be accepted into fine art, popular music can be used as advertising, popular advertising references fine art. Video artist Warren Neidich writes, "[t]here is no longer any temporal disparity between the art world and the real world. They are porous to each other and ideas are flowing rapidly back and forth" (Neidich, 2003). This makes for an intimidating profusion of styles and approaches. The task at hand for art educators is to encourage spirited investigation as they help students

develop a relationship with art. From there, intelligent choices can be made regarding studio practice and the study of art.

Postmodernism and contemporary art

Although the label "contemporary" may refer by definition to that which is of the moment, I use it here to describe a way that art may be currently understood. In other words, one may view historical threads related to Western art from a contemporary perspective. If one expands the scope of historical connections, new or hidden associations may surface (i.e., the impact of Jackson Pollock's action paintings on advertising design). One philosophical approach that encourages contemporary reexamination of past influences is postmodernism. "Postmodern" is a persistently difficult term for scholars to unanimously define or agree upon (Perry & Wood, 2004). In this project I evoke the term because of its fluid perspective and strength as a philosophical idea that continues to inform contemporary art making (Perry & Wood, 2004).

Postmodernism rejects "fixed" understandings and encourages examination of concealed meanings. These multiple meanings are promoted by postmodernism's rejection of linear progression. Instead of a single narrative, it encourages the use of pastiche and collage as conceptual and literal techniques for constructing (or revealing hidden) points of view-including points of view the creator of the work never considered.

The completion of an understanding by way of assembling portions of information into a whole is a signature postmodern technique. Furthermore there is no hierarchy given to source material or ways of knowing. This is a basic tenet of

postmodernism- a suspicion of totalizing discourses and grand narratives (Gude, 2004). This explains postmodernism's embrace of cultural phenomena previously considered "low" (advertising, comic books, television programming). These concepts drive my curricular goals for Artlab.

Under these premises, not only current art production but all art from any historical context, historical to present can be considered related, equally valid, and capable of coexistence. All forms of art are also open to critical reexamination, with the knowledge that the contexts in which they are understood may change (Davies, 2006). For example, Japanese B-grade science fiction movies (e.g. *Godzilla*, Honda, 1954) produced during post World War Two decades can be seen as a reflection of the fears and anxieties of a culture that were recently threatened with annihilation by a superpower (Artlab examined the Polish post-Occupation short film *Break Up the Dance* (Polanski, 1957) in a similar light).

Postmodernism informed the design of the Artlab curriculum. Shaping students into junior postmodern philosophers is not my intention. I do want to establish an expansive groundwork for art discussion. It is presumed that this knowledge will free students from restrictions in regard to production, and allow them to fully explore possibilities. It will also prepare them to encounter art in their lives beyond school.

CHAPTER III

Dialogue

Dialogue allows ideas and topics to emerge by encouraging the spirit of investigation. As Raney and Hollands offer, talking about art can bridge different domains of communication and production and establish needed conceptual frameworks for understanding: “At its most useful, talking about art has an integrating action, ushering into living awareness more of the visual world and illuminating our relationship to it” (Raney & Hollands, p.41, 2000).

There is no rulebook that governs art making, the way we are supposed to feel when experiencing it, or the conclusions we meet in our interpretations. Since art offers a series of puzzles with no definitive answers, it is an excellent subject to explore using dialogue. The guidelines of dialogue specific to Artlab are based on those of David Bohm and Nicholas Burbules. Both writers base their conception in the Socratic method, in which a teacher leads an inexperienced pupil to discovery through discussion. The term dialogue here is used simply to describe a process of deep inquiry carried out by a group of people. Bohm, Factor and Garrett (1991) summarize the process as a phenomenon that

“...enables inquiry into, and understanding of, the sorts of processes that fragment and interfere with real communication between individuals, nations and even different parts of the same organization. In our modern culture men and women are able to interact with one another in many ways.... but their ability to talk together about subjects that matter deeply to them seems invariable [*sic*] to

lead to dispute, division and often to violence... It [can be] seen as an arena in which collective learning takes place and out of which a sense of increased harmony, fellowship and creativity can arise” (Bohm, Factor & Garrett, 1991).

Burbules connects dialogue and pedagogy, describing it as “a conversational interaction directed intentionally toward teaching and learning” (Burbules, 1993, p.x).

According to Burbules, dialogue is based in inquiry and interaction; it is not to be ‘led’ or focused on a particular conclusion. In fact, during dialogue the role of the teacher changes from that of leader to moderator or even further, to an equalized member of the group. Burbules warns against manipulative, one-sided or restrictive dialogue as instruction. Quoting Freire, Burbules asserts “This leveling (or masking) of authority serves to encourage participants to learn from each other, not from a single source” (Burbules, 1993). The goal is interpersonal understanding. The idea of dialogue as an open discussion is supported by a list of criteria outlined by David Bridges:

The subject matter is not circumscribed

The participants are open-minded

The participants are receptive to new points of view

Anyone can participate

Time is not a serious constraint

The objectives of the discussion are open

The member’s purposes and practices are overt and open to examination

(Burbules, 1993).

Like Bohm, Burbules defines dialogue as a form of communication that should be defined separately from debate or casual discussion. The goal of dialogue is inquiry that

leads to understanding. The understanding can be gained through democratic and serious pursuit of the questions that are being considered: "Dialogue is an activity directed toward discovery and new understanding, which stands to improve the knowledge, insight, or sensitivity of its participants... Dialogue represents a continuous, developmental communicative interchange through which we stand to gain a fuller apprehension of the world, ourselves, and one another" (Burbules, 1993, p. 8). Because of its open-endedness, Burbules' dialogue is perfectly suited to introduce concepts such as divergent thinking, so long as the participants exhibit mutual concern and respect. The risks the instructor takes when letting go of a degree of authority are presumably worth it, if the payoff is authentic learning.

Burbules stresses the importance of "nonteleological" discussions-those that are not designed to herd participants through a course of predetermined checkpoints before arriving at a foregone conclusion. According to Burbules, "teleological" discussions run the risk of impeding open communication. Burbules views postmodern concepts, especially those that embrace pluralism and the political analysis of power structures as positive influences on dialogue.

It should be noted here that I did not expect the neutral, respectful atmosphere described by Burbules and Bohm to develop spontaneously. In fact, I turned down the chance to conduct this study during my student teaching at a high school with large classes that would guarantee good sample sizes. I declined this option because I doubted the high school classes' ability to "switch" smoothly from the existing culture of the school to the dialogue model (and presumably back again) during my stay. For Artlab I was able to layout guidelines for successful dialogue from the onset. The guidelines were

simple; in effect the group was asked to agree to a list of conditions that added up to a polite conversation in which all participants were included and respected.

Criticism in contemporary art education

Open-ended discussions about art that are not constrained by fixed perspectives allow students freedom to explore meaning and draw new connections to artwork. In the classroom, this places renewed emphasis on the role of art criticism.

Much of how we understand art today is bound up with information that exists beyond the immediate visual experience of seeing a work of art. Understanding visual art often requires the viewer to explore the work from within various social or cultural contexts in order to grasp the artist's intent. This probably has its beginnings in the institutional theory of art described by Arthur Danto and George Dickie, among others. The institutional theory of art is significant because it relies on relational criteria to assign objects, actions, etc., as art (Danto, 1964). The institutional theory of art explains how commonplace items with no obvious relationship to "art" can be validated as such via the artist, the gallery, or the Artworld.

Furthermore, the work of an artist may be understood differently or more completely by critics or evaluators outside the artist's own understanding (Archer, 1997). Performance art and new media based in hypertext or video also demand contextual reads in order to be understood. Much current thinking about art relies on being understood in terms of social discourse- what is said or not said about it, and the environment and time in which it exists (Raney & Hollands, in Sefton-Green & Sinker, 2000). Given these conditions, the meaning of a particular work of art can be expected to shift as social

attitudes and understandings surrounding it fluctuate. It is this flexibility in understanding art that begs critical inquiry from the art viewer.

In his book, *Interpreting art: Reflecting, wondering, and responding*, Terry Barrett outlines a set of principles for interpreting artwork. In part, Barrett's principles are a call for open and generous interpretations. He champions pluralistic reads and places importance upon context when determining meaning. Six of the principles from Barrett's book reflect attitudes that were encouraged by Artlab:

1. Artworks attract multiple interpretations and it is not the goal of interpretation to arrive at single, grand, unified, composite interpretations
 2. There is a range of interpretations any artwork will allow
 3. Interpretations are not so much right, but are more or less reasonable, convincing, informative, and enlightening
 4. Good interpretations tell more about the artwork than they tell about the interpreter
 5. Some interpretations are better than others
 6. The admissibility of an interpretation is ultimately determined by a community of interpreters and the community is self-correcting
- (Barrett, 2003).

DBAE and ways to increase critical thinking

Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on

universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness (Scriven & Paul, 2004).

Freedman has suggested ways in which classroom assessment can enhance student's abilities (Freedman, 2003). By using group techniques such as small group critique, peer pairing, and role play, and assessment techniques such as portfolio reviews when addressing art "problems", students are given opportunity for ownership within problem solving, and can apply critical thinking to their classroom experience. By and large these methods are related to DBAE approaches to critical thinking, but with greater emphasis placed on interpretive aspects.

DBAE texts on criticism recommend methods of inquiry such as the Feldman Approach (Dobbs, 1992), which concentrates on intrinsic or visible aspects of artworks (Prater, 2002). As mentioned earlier, the four steps of critical process suggested by Feldman are: description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment. This approach favors discussion over writing, giving students a chance to develop and articulate their ideas in a conversational setting (Donmoyer, 1993). It is also flexible enough to be adapted to various skill and age levels. When using the Feldman approach with contemporary works, it is particularly important in the interpretive stage to bring in more contextual reading of the art (Geahigan, 1999, Prater, 2002, Walker, 1996). Such expanded interpretations can illuminate the descriptive and analytic aspects of the process as well. This would allow for the inclusion of material referencing the artist's history and critical viewpoints attached to the work by sources beyond the artist (as per my linking postmodernism and discussion of contemporary art). It was hoped that my research

project would keep the interpretive channels of criticism open enough to allow students to draw their own conclusions while being guided through new concepts.

The fourth stage of Feldman's method, judgment, did not readily apply to Artlab. I strove to keep final judgments of artwork as open as possible, beyond a few well-placed facts or historical cues. However, desire to bring the class to accept my judgment of an artwork was often very strong, and I didn't always succeed in that goal. This is not to say that I preferred the class make uninformed guesses about the art they saw. Rather, I hoped I could guide them up to a point, then allow them to form their own opinions based on their (viewing) experience combined with new information. In this sense, there was a desire on my part to play the role of art critic, and serve as a guide so that my students might have new insights into the work. This educational objective often conflicted with my desire for students to explore diverse thinking.

Post-DBAE models of art criticism

Another model of inquiry I considered while developing Artlab was one proposed by Marjo Rasanen. Rasanen's model of experiential art learning characterizes history, aesthetics, and criticism as "inquiry based on concepts" and art production as "inquiry based on experience"(Erikson, 1999). Rasanen proposes to integrate DBAE and self-expression approaches in one model. The approach (in her example lesson) involves applying historical contexts to a well-known work of art, and guiding students to create reflective artwork about the studied work. Where the Feldman Method ends in students' linguistic interpretation, Rasanen extends that knowledge back into art making.

To elaborate on this idea, it's possible that in lessons like this one the student can experience problem solving in a meaningful way by deciding his or her own path to the solution. There could be room for the free choice that occurs during undirected art production. The difference is that the student is given a knowledge base (the artwork in question and his newly formed conception of its meaning) upon which to construct a response. The interpretation of the information can then be used in art production that is full of personal choices, but solidly grounded in context. Rasanen's model, like the approaches to inquiry and critical thinking mentioned earlier, makes use of self-evaluation (reflection, journaling) and discussion along with direct instruction. The lesson focuses primarily on discovering meaning in art; particularly meaning that has personal connections to the student.

A variation on this idea is Sydney Walkers' proposal for guided thematics. Walker identified four interpretive strategies as important to the study: Thematic Unity, Oppositions, Description, and Intertextuality. Walker believes a key strategy in constructing understandings about artworks is the organization of interpretation around a central theme (Thematic Unity). This is similar to existing art- education approaches which structure lessons on artist's "big ideas" (Walker, 2001). Similarly, by bringing in supporting material that exists beyond the artwork itself, the critic/artist/viewer can establish ties to concepts beyond the visual impression left by the artwork in question.

Developing critical thinking through "big ideas" is not just a problem of content knowledge, but it also requires understanding a structure to the content. Walker (1996) studied differing results among expert, novice, and intermediary subjects in a critical exercise to better understand art education students' critical thinking skill gain insight

into practical art classroom criticism techniques. Walker found important differences in the ability of experts to structure content in their curriculum. She concluded that “it is not just that experts know more, it is equally significant that they know how to structure knowledge“ (Walker, 1996 p. 91).

Cynthia Freeland similarly illustrates the importance of critical inquiry in the art classroom. Upon examining critical essays on the work of painter Francis Bacon, she noticed differences that arose between the artists’ stated intentions, published criticism, and her own understanding of the work. Bacon insisted his works were formal exercises, yet the intense and disturbing themes in the paintings suggested technique was only a part of the picture. Critically attacked on the one hand for his controversial works, Bacon was praised on the other for his technical expertise. In particular, Freeland cites a critic who completely ignored Bacon’s subject matter in order to champion his talent. This scenario illustrates how multiple, and possibly conflicting viewpoints can provide a richer overall understanding, and how individual perspectives, including the intentions of an artist are probably flawed or incomplete (Freeland, 2001).

The problems of focusing on criticism in the classroom

While multiple views can be confusing, keeping discussions open to new ideas and resistant to closure may be a way to stimulate and instill critical inquiry in the curriculum. A problem with using critical exercises to achieve the target results is that production time may be limited. Effective use of student’s time is a factor in any discipline. Although students’ (and parents’) expectations coming into an art classroom may be that it will be production focused, it is possible to squeeze in inquiry and critical

thinking into the curriculum without much complaint. This turned out to be the case for Artlab, which suffered decreases in production when student's desired discussions ran longer than scheduled.

Conclusion

Student's lack of knowledge bases for utilizing critical thinking inhibits their ability to draw reasoned conclusions about what they experience, and to reflect upon their own thoughts. To make a broad case of it, these kinds of deficiencies may well carry over to adulthood, and negatively impact society. To take a Western example, democratic societies probably stand to benefit greatly from the ability to apply critical thinking since important political and economic decisions are made through the consensus of individuals.

The art classroom can be a low pressure, exciting environment from which critical thinking concepts can be introduced. It's true that the critical exercises outlined here bear more on the student's interpretation of art than on student's own art work. They focus on historical and social contexts that may not be readily understood by young students. The high school art student can locate him or herself within some social and historical frameworks, if not in the ways a sophisticated career artist can be seen. In fact, teenagers actively seek to position themselves within social contexts-its a condition of their age. In my opinion, students can apply habits of inquiry to future challenges, future art experience, the student's pursuit of a chosen discipline, and other life choices.

“The production of an artwork represents a tangible coalescence of the student's controlled critical thinking and feeling, focuses the student's

attention on the elements of experience required to animate a work of art...thinking through the production of art will broaden the student's receptivity to the purely conceptual aspects of the subject he or she is studying (White & Robinson 2001)."

As with all aspects of art, it is a challenge to assess the benefits that come from critical analysis and inquiry. Studies are not conclusive, and theorists do not always agree upon what is of casual concern or that which should not be overlooked. It seems that critical thinking is a useful skill that can be enhanced and improved through art education, and perhaps research will reveal it to be indispensable as a tool for assessment.

Finally, my vision of Artlab as a unique, collaborative creative creation was inspired in part by artist Joseph Beuys' ideas about the nature and purpose of art. He believed that the communication of ideas and other social interactions aren't mere precursors to the more tangible act of art making, but are actually what art is. Beuys used his "expanded art concept" to view society as a sculptural form to which everyone contributes (Tempkin & Rose, 1993). Beuys' term *Social Sculpture* refers to a conception of art, framed as an interdisciplinary and participatory process in which thought, speech and discussion are core 'materials'. With this perception, all human beings are seen as 'artists' responsible for the shaping of a democratic, sustainable social order. Social Sculpture lifts the aesthetic from its confines within a specific sphere or media, relocating it within a collective, imaginative work-space in which we can see, re-think and reshape our lives in tune with our creative potential (Social Sculpture Research Unit, 2006). The notion of Artlab as a kind of "Wiki" experience fits nicely with Beuys'

social sculpture; the dialogue was a malleable form all participants helped shape.

Undoubtedly, each group member left the course with his or her own opinions about what had been discussed, but each one left having made a contribution to the experience.

CHAPTER IV

Artlab defined

The Artlab syllabus was designed with the intention of stimulating and maintaining dialogue about contemporary art in a way that would encourage authenticity and ownership of the content. The original focus of the research was on tracking the development of selected creative traits during the course. The proposed research aimed to link aesthetic dialogue with enhanced studio production by focusing on development of targeted creative thinking skills. In a broad sense, its function was to explore the relationship between thinking about art creatively and producing creative art. The curriculum, which touched on many subjects related to contemporary art, was designed to encourage divergent and critical thinking. While traits of creative thinking and critical thinking are usually separated, in the art room they may each be of equal importance. Being able to organize information thematically is a critical -thinking skill that is strengthened by the development of knowledge bases from which to draw references. The organization of unlike themes that are related by context is a form of divergent thinking, which is a creative ability.

The Group

Using clues supplied by the members, and direct observations of their behavior in class, I have made cursory profiles that may aid in analysis of the recorded dialogue: "M" was a sixteen-year old male high school student. I gleaned from his conversations in class that his parents took an interest in exposing him to the arts. During the course he

brought up several anecdotes about museum trips. He exhibited a fairly well-rounded knowledge base about some of the topics discussed. He was interested in talking about visits to museums, although his disposition while describing them was typically dismissive and rather shallow. "M" tended to be a little less mature than some of the other participants. He often spoke over people who were talking, and did not offer to clarify his mumbled remarks unless prompted. He was not very self-assured, and this insecurity may have contributed to his refusal to involve himself very deeply in early discussions. "M" avoided answering the pre and post questionnaires seriously. He gave flippant, aloof responses to most questions or left no answer. One interesting development during the course was the growth of "M's" response rates; they were significantly higher in week two. Unfortunately these changes did not affect the quality of his exit questionnaire responses; they were very similar to those he gave for the first.

"Z" was the other male participating in the course. He was fifteen years old. "Z" also had some previous exposure to art, and was familiar with a number of the artists we discussed. "Z's" father is a practicing artist, and this no doubt contributed to his existing knowledge base. "Z" was usually ready with carefully considered opinions about whatever issue was being discussed. Often, his responses were followed by lengthy elaborations. In conversation, "Z" was prone to lead the group into "sidetrack" topics, usually about current events associated with technologies.

"AS" was a fifteen-year old student with whom I was already familiar. She was a student with whom I had worked as a student teacher earlier in the year. "AS" was an exceptional student. Like "Z" and "M", she came to Artlab with a fairly well established knowledge base about the arts from which to draw. "AS" had an interest in philosophy,

and expected to pursue that field seriously once in college. She planned to apply for early enrollment after spending a year studying abroad. "AS" could at times become a dominating presence during group discussions. She often challenged the validity of a given topic, whether it came from literature, her peers, or myself. She asked many thought provoking questions throughout the course. Her response graphs show a consistently high number of responses-as-questions. She enjoyed sharing her knowledge of history and world events, and would often bring what she knew into play during discussions. Her strong opinions and willingness to defend her positions made her a major contributor, but also someone who tended to covet having the last word. "AS" was polite and soft spoken, and these qualities probably helped prevent her from taking on too much of a leadership role in the class. Although "AS" was often the most heard voice, I believe a sense of neutrality permeated the meetings.

"K" was a quiet, shy fifteen-year old high school student. "K" also came to Artlab with some previous cultural experiences (museums, galleries, theater), but was not forthcoming with the extent of her knowledge. She had moved to Athens from a major northern city, and had done some traveling in Europe. "K" was interested in reading, but did not always seem to have read the assignments for the class. It was difficult to gauge the level of her involvement because she preferred to remain silent during long stretches of conversation. A bit of a daydreamer, "K" would sometimes appear to miss major points made during a discussion, or focus on small details rather than explore large themes. On a few occasions, she came up with unusual responses or solutions. "K's" novel contributions suggested to me a unique creativity, but as her responses were few and far between, I did not get a very full picture of her abilities. "K" consistently

produced low numbers of responses, but did increase the number of elaborations and peer interaction.

“LI” was a fifteen-year old high school student. She did not appear to have as much exposure to art as the other four participants. In contrast to “K”, “LI” was outgoing and appeared to enjoy discussing unfamiliar topics. “LI” had an interest in photography, and planned to attend an art school. “LI” appeared to be slightly less mature than a few of her peers. Unfortunately, “LI’s” parents removed her from the program for four days to take a family trip. While I regret the hole in data her absence caused, I was interested to find a spike in responses from other participants when she was not there. Similar spikes occurred when “Z” missed a day. These findings seem to illustrate shifts in group dynamics. Of particular note was the dramatic increase in “M’s” responses when LI was absent (see response graphs in addendum).

“LE” was a thirteen-year old high school student. Unfortunately, she opted to quit the group after only two days. There was some initial trepidation on my part when I learned her age. I was worried that “LE” might not be able to comfortably discuss issues that might arise in a contemporary art class, or that she would be too unfamiliar with the topics I chose. This turned out to not be the case. “LE” was very willing to contribute to class, and was not at all intimidated by the subject matter or the older teens. She answered thoughtfully and easily volunteered her opinions. “LE” was interested in dance, and I was interested in how she might connect the discussions with that pursuit. Although “LE” was only in the group for a short duration, I included her responses in the data for two reasons: 1) because they were interesting and 2) the continuity of the

dialogue would be interrupted were I to excise her comments, since the overall body of dialogue was affected by them.

Also present in the dialogue, but not included in the graph analysis of the discussion were myself and occasionally the teaching assistants who were in the room during group activities.

Setting

The group members met for two and a half hour long daily sessions Monday through Friday to discuss issues surrounding current art making. For discussions the group met in an unused photography lab; a fitting place for Artlab, which was described as a place to “explore cultural specimens”. The photography lab offered a television monitor and a white bulletin board, which was used as a screen for the video projector. It was a fairly intimate space, and it worked well for the small class size. Everyone sat around two folding tables. Participants were permitted to take breaks, and the lab was located just outside a vending area and bathrooms. However, I was surprised (and pleased) to note that only rarely did anyone request a break, even when reminded they could do so. The group met in a spacious drawing studio for the production leg of the classes. The drawing studio had high ceilings and windows. Students were given any materials they needed to work on their projects. I found it difficult to record these sessions due to the large, open space and the tendency of the group members to spread out in the large room. I opted to discuss project developments with the participants individually, and take careful notes. Another area used by Artlab was a large video

projection theater. I used the theater to screen a short student film by director Roman Polanski called *Break Up the Dance*.

Syllabus

The Artlab syllabus consisted mainly of a selection of readings bound into individual booklets. Each participant was given a booklet. The readings in the booklets were chosen for their potential to stimulate conversation about topics related to current art making. Participants were assigned one reading per night, and the readings were discussed along with the day's other topics. The readings, which were excerpts from a variety of literature, ranged from artist interviews to comic book narratives, and were generally provocative (see addendum). Readings were supplemented by audio and video material that was presented using a laptop computer and video projector, as well as other media.

Daily topics

Daily topics were compiled in order to provide historical background about some key developments in art history, and open discussion about issues surrounding contemporary art. Major themes included "Art and Commerce/Value in Art"; "Fine Art and Popular Culture"; "Controversy". "Add-ons" were discussions carried over from topics raised in previous discussions. In this way, the daily schedule acted as a notebook that tracked changes made to accommodate the ongoing dialogue. A typical schedule of topics was arranged in this way (for notes from day six see addendum).

Guest speaker

For the eighth day of class I invited Steven Thompson to discuss his current art projects. Steven is an active artist who has shown work at the Armory Show in New York City. Thompson also discussed his personal ideas about the artist and creative act. He lectured for 40 minutes before taking questions from the class.

Studio Assignment

The studio portion of Artlab was intended to share equal time with the dialogue session. Participants were to make artworks within a fairly strict set of guidelines for material. Paper was chosen for its flexibility and availability; it can be drawn on, used as a building material for three-dimensional work, cut into tiny pieces or formed into large sections, etc. I created a selection of literature for participants to use as “starting points” for the main studio project. My rationale was that by providing a concrete place to start from, participants could begin their projects without lengthy deliberation. Also, choosing among a selection of literature gave me an advantage when assessing their approaches, as I would be more likely to see work generated solely for my class. I hoped that a third benefit would be that I would observe interesting creations come about inspired by literature. The readings were chosen for their vivid imagery and intense themes. For the selection I used three short stories (maximum 9 pages) and one poem (see addendum).

Students had the entire two weeks to work on this project. However, I did not stress the need to finish any work. Instead I encouraged participants to follow inspiration, and begin new projects that might “stem” from ideas in previous attempts. I

was aiming for quantity of attempts over quality of a single project. It was hoped that participants would follow individual courses of discovery with the project, and be led by their own ideas about what was successful in their work. I made it clear that I did not expect a single finished work. I also stressed the point that the work need not illustrate the literature, or reference it directly, so long as I was briefed on the progression of ideas.

Field recording project

For this take home project I asked group members to make a record of something local they found interesting. I encouraged them to pursue something they normally would not have on their own. The purpose of the exercise was to promote curiosity and a sense of positive investigation. It is my belief that curiosity and investigation are key qualities of mind for an artist to possess. I kept the method of recording fairly open, so long as students used recording devices of some kind rather than orally recounting, drawing, etc. I tried to focus them on audio, video, or photographic reproductions of an environment. This homework project, like the other studio project, had a two-week deadline.

A course readings booklet is included in this report, as well as a copy of the complete syllabus. It may interest the reader to compare the scheduled daily topics of conversation with the numerous “add-ons” precipitated by previous discussions, or sidetracks.

CHAPTER V

Assessing traits and responses

Trait charts

The traits defined in this project should be considered interchangeable. For example- it's usually novel (Originality) to connect unlike ideas (Flexibility). The ideas being connected may be part of a well-developed knowledge base (Fluency). This combination of fluency and flexibility can generate an original solution. Also, it should be noted that a certain degree of judgment was applied to each response before labeling it with any trait. Sometimes a participant sent the conversation in another direction without being particularly original, or generated a number of responses that weren't coherent enough to be considered fully formed ideas. Transcriptions used in this report to illustrate traits may represent a combination of traits.

During the first week of Artlab I realized the original scoring rubrics I developed to track changes in the display of creative traits were not nuanced enough to pick up subtle changes. I modified the tables by expanding my options for recording the degree to which a trait was shown. Originally, the charts only offered three options: "excellent", "fair", and "poor". The new charts allowed for three "degrees" to be shown within the options. This way, a participant could be rated as showing a low, middle, or high degree of excellence. By adding arrow symbols; "<", I was able to track a progression through the week. A "<" next to a mark in the "middle" section of the "excellent" field signified an increase in that trait during the week. Production data is shown alongside dialogue for purposes of comparison. Data from participant "LE" was omitted because she wasn't in

the group long enough to provide sufficient data for comparison. The ratings I gave group members were based on observations during discussion and production times (see addendum). Other factors that affected graph data were absences, incomplete (unread) homework, inability to communicate ideas about a project, low response rates, etc.

The final breakdown showed these results for Artlab: participants responded to discussion and studio assignments in a variety of ways, but all showed an increase in most traits during the two week observation period. Most participants improved their elaboration and fluency skills, and to varying degrees. Follows is a breakdown of participant “K’s” trait chart and the observations I recorded about her. Refer to addendum for complete charts and observations on each participant:

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility		X< X		
fluency		X	X<	
originality	X	X		
elaboration		X X		

K
 Week one Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility	X	X		
fluency		X X		
originality	X X			
elaboration		X X		

K

Week two Dialogue/**Production**

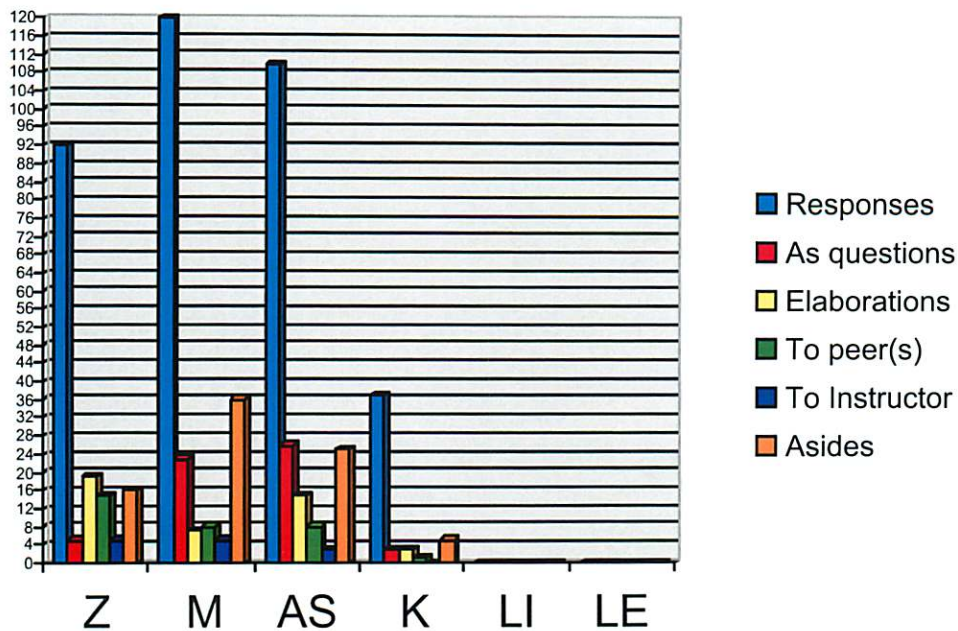
Studio Project: *Secret Observations on the Goat Girl*, Joyce Carol Oates.

K's shy disposition made her a consistently low scorer in discussion responses. For the same reason, her trait chart reflects low scores for elaboration and fluency in the area of dialogue. However, K did make improvements by slightly increasing her elaborations in class. She also contributed some interesting sidetracks that ended up enhancing the dialogue. K made two drawings related to her story choice. The first one was highly original in concept; a depiction of a main character as K perceived her before reading the story, and then after. It was essentially two contrasting portraits of the goat girl character. I found this to be a highly inventive and novel approach that was unencumbered by a sense of what was expected of her. Unfortunately, K misplaced this original drawing. Her second attempt was also very inventive, and reflected K's own interests more than her original drawing. The work was well realized, and I was pleased that it strayed away from the "starting point" of the original story. K's field project was also very unusual. She had wrestled with the idea of photographing stars at night with an

ordinary hand held camera. Without a telephoto or wide-angle lens and tripod, the likelihood of capturing a discernable image of the night sky seemed slim. I had advised her to try it anyway and see what happened, even if the results were not what she had hoped. As a teacher, I hoped that a new direction would come from it. K surprised me on the final critique by showing us all an image of a dark sky, streetlight and star captured on her cell phone, which had a digital camera function. K was a little ambiguous about the reasons behind her choice to use the phone, but regardless of her motivations, it was a captivating final piece.

Response graphs

The response graphs were made in an attempt to dissect the nature of participant's responses during Artlab sessions. The graphs represent a log of single instances (responses) on a daily basis broken down into response types. The graphs allow distinctions between types of responses to be seen, over a simple tally. The total number of is recorded first, and underneath that number are sub-categories that describe various types of responses.



Sample response graph, Artlab Day V

The response graphs are divided into five sub-categories: Responses as questions, as elaborations, to peers, to me, and as asides.

Responses charted as questions showed participants' curiosity about a subject or requests for elaboration. Responses that were requests for simple clarification (ex: "huh?") were discarded.

Responses as elaborations are directly related to the creative trait charts. Elaborations were the most difficult to track during the conversations because they could not be easily counted like simple responses. Care was taken to record the *number of elaborations* on a particular topic, not the number of responses within the elaboration. The charts do not record the length of single elaborations. For this reason, some participants may show comparatively low numbers of elaborations even though they

contributed a great deal to the discussion. Participant “Z” showed many examples of this problem. He tended to elaborate in a single, extended reply, and did not offer much in the way of rebuttals. An elaboration in the graphs is understood as an instance of a participant expounding on a topic, whether it took him or her several prompts or a few.

A distinction was made between **Responses to Peer(s)** and **Responses to me**. “Responses to Peer(s)” was included as a way to chart any increases in group involvement. Replies to other participants were seen as positive growth. None of the participants knew each other prior to the summer program. The “Responses to Me” column was added as a way to deal with bits of conversation that didn’t seem to fit into the other sub-categories. Typically, it was used only if a participant seemed to be addressing me alone. Usually it denotes an off-topic remark or a question aimed directly at me (ex: “How many paintings have you sold?”).

Asides were comments that were meant only for one other person to hear, said under the breath, or interruptions. If someone spoke on top of another person, and was not understood, or made an unclear remark that was not clarified, it was recorded as an aside. This category was added as a way to clarify the large number of responses from some participants. In particular, “M” has a habit of talking under other people’s responses, or interrupting. He also tended to reply in mumbled phrases that he didn’t offer to repeat. This was a problem in the data, as his response numbers became fairly high, but his contributions (in the form of intelligible language) were actually low. Logically, there was a relationship between *number* of responses and other response categories. Typically, participants who came up with numerous responses tended to elaborate on their own responses or respond to another group member. Fluctuations in

responses in some members occurred when others were absent. Some participants' responses remained low throughout the course, although they showed improvements in their trait data. This is because while their actual responses stayed in a low range, the quality of responses showed an overall improvement (see especially "K", in addendum). It is also of note that those participants who scored high overall numbers in the response graphs also showed more "excellent" marks in the trait graphs.

Dialogue: The Artlab Experience

On the first day of Artlab I described the content of the course to a clutch of five silent teenagers. As I went over the syllabus, I scanned the faces of the kids who were to be my students for the next two weeks. They seemed to regard me coolly, and gave little indication that anything I said was of interest. This phenomenon was familiar to me. When addressing a group of adolescents for the first time there is a tendency on the part of the students to maintain an initial distance. A group of silent teens might seem ideal to many teachers, but this was a discussion group, and my goal was to close the gap as quickly as possible. My strategy to get a conversation going was to talk about some early experiences I had with contemporary art:

"I want to tell you some of my first experiences with art. I want to show you where I was when I was on page one with contemporary art. My first experiences with art...when I was a young kid...I saw reproductions of Van Gogh's paintings...If you don't know his work, he's a Post-Impressionist, [he used] very bright colors. He did "Starry Night": really bright vibrant colors and thick brush strokes. I had a really strong response to these works, especially a painting of crows in a wheat field (*Wheat Fields with Crows*, 1890). Partly, I didn't

understand what I was looking at, because [this] was clearly the wrong way to paint...And then the other thing I had was this feeling that I wanted to know this more, and that I knew it in some way already. I had a very, this is hard to say or describe, a very soulful experience.”

From there I described for the class a few personal, formative moments that I believe contributed to my decision to pursue art as a career. The memories I described for them were examples of aesthetic experiences that had lasting effects on me: seeing (and misinterpreting) the painting *Beata Beatrix* (1870) by Rosetti (I would later show the class digital reproductions of the work), and trips to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. The MCA was at one time a very frustrating place for me to visit, and I recounted for the group an exhibition that particularly bothered me: Mike Kelly’s sock puppets arranged on card tables (*Half a Man*, 1991). I tried to convey to them how I developed from an artist with a contentious attitude toward contemporary art to one who approached it with great interest. I went on to recount a visit to another Chicago gallery that showed collapsed cardboard boxes at an exhibition at a time when I couldn’t get an art show. Then I described how seeing the Mike Kelly show had a positive impact on my relationship with contemporary art by inspiring me to research meaning. I sought to relieve anxiety by discussing personal doubts I once held about the validity of contemporary art, and my own failures to understand some art I had experienced. While the class didn’t immediately warm up to me, it wasn’t long before they began offering their own experiences and opinions to the mix of the daily dialogue.

My collapsed cardboard box anecdote became a recurring theme in the ongoing dialogue. Recurring themes raised my interest as a researcher. The themes could be

major or minor. A major recurring theme was the question of value in contemporary art. An example of a lesser theme was “Swedish death metal”. The death metal theme became a running joke in the group, although it originated in a serious topic of conversation, installations by artist Banks Violette that addressed negatively obsessed music fans. Recurring themes distinguished the dialogue from rigid, textbook-style lessons. They also helped identify the dialogue as the result of a group effort. As with any collective, Artlab had established its own vernacular. One theme was the connection between the fine art world and the world of popular culture, specifically the music industry. In the following passage I use it to illustrate the difference between using a subject as homage or inspiration. The discussion gradually developed from a question about authenticity (Day II):

ME: People say there’s no wrong way to do art. This is a conversation I was just having with my friend Steven...What do you think? Is there a wrong way?

Anybody have an idea? What would be an example of doing it the wrong way?

AS: Doing it for an audience, not doing it for yourself.

ME: Doing it for you, not for say, a gallery?

Z (interrupting): if you were doing something just for the money, I guess that wouldn’t be art.

AS: Yeah.

ME: Just for the money? Like what? Can you give me an example of “just for the money”?

Z: Like if someone became a painter just so they could sell the paintings but they didn’t enjoy it, or it didn’t have any meaning behind it.

LI: That could still be art, but you're not considered an artist...

Z: Yeah. Right. It's still the wrong...It still shouldn't do that, I guess.

ME: I see what you mean. I come down on it morally, too. I know what you're saying, and I'll have you know there are plenty of artists who plan their careers out very well based on the money they're going to get and they [are successful] doing that, they make no bones about what they're doing it for.

LE: Well, isn't that a job that you don't make much money at unless you're really successful? So if you went into it [just for painting], well, not too many people are successful doing it, would you still make a lot of money?

ME: I debated whether I should bring that up earlier when I was putting this thing together because it's true. It's a field where people become fabulously wealthy, insanely well off, but the majority of people do not.... You're right. Going into it for the money is a huge gamble. Unless you are rich first, and connected up.

LE: Well, wouldn't you go into it because you love doing it?

ME: I think most people do.

The discussion about "good or bad" art leads into the question of authenticity (someone responded in the questionnaire that art is good if it's "true and authentic"). The dialogue is moving along under the steam of the participants, who appear to suss out the details for themselves, to their own satisfaction. At this point I begin to direct the conversation back to a discussion about influences:

ME: What do you think about that? I don't know that I can tell all the time if a piece of art is authentic, and genuine, it's "coming from the right place"...

LE: Well, I don't really know, I don't think there is a wrong way to do art. Well, maybe, I can't think of anything [that would be wrong].

ME: When my friend and I were talking, we decided that [it's wrong] when you're not engaged with it in a meaningful way...

LE: Yeah.

ME:...if you're doing it because you see people have done "this" and it looks like art, or ...if you are interested in an idea that's one thing, but if you are interested in passing yourself off as being something you're still making art but you're not making it from a deep down place...I don't know.

LE: Yeah. I guess that's a reason we do art.

AS: I guess you could say you are making a painting, but you're not making art.

ME: And that's the other one...Yesterday AS brought up the photograph out in the hall of a cat...I saw it, it's cute.

TA: It's cute. A hundred dollars! (laughs)

ME: A hundred dollars. Now, how can you put a value on a little kitty?

TA: (laughs)

ME: Ann was saying it's just banal; it's just a little bit of fluff. It's kind of cliché, it could be a greeting card. It's not even up to that professional standard; it's a snapshot of a kitty. It's cute, there's nothing wrong with that. Someone loved this cat and someone took a picture of it, is my thought. (I meant to steer this in the direction of the importance of context!) ...There's nothing wrong with it, but it's art that expresses an interest versus art that is expressing an idea. It doesn't ever really go beyond the idea of the kitten. You know what I'm saying?

AS: Yeah.

ME: So it's art, yeah, but it's...

LI: (interrupting) It's not very meaningful; it just doesn't go any deeper than that.

ME: Yeah. There's a personal connection, there's a meaning and you're communicating that, but beyond that...it's not penetrating deeper than your first response of "what a cute cat" or "I hate cats" or whatever. (laughter)

The following excerpt reveals an interesting facet to the Artlab experience. I attempted to engage the group in a discussion about influences. As we spoke, I began to realize the group was reluctant to discuss the origins of their particular styles, tastes, or interests. I was reminded of a certain reluctance on my part as a teenager to admit to the influence of outside ideas, and related that experience to the group with mixed results:

ME: (to the group) Can you say at this point in your life that you have any influences?

K: I'm still exploring. I don't really know yet.

ME: ...Anybody have something they can claim as an influence? Anything. I don't care if it's not art.

LE: Well, I dance, but I don't really paint or [take photographs] or anything, so..

ME: Well, with dancing, which is art, what is it that...

LE:(interrupting)...Makes me like it?

ME: Well, what makes you do it? Where did you get your interest in it? You watched someone else dance at one point I'm assuming.

LE: I liked [watching dance] and when I was little my mom always sent me to ballets [and sometimes] when I'm angry or sad I have to dance, and I can kind of

forget about whatever's happening in my life and I can just concentrate on one thing and it helps me forget about the bad things in life, or what I'm having trouble in [sic].

ME: Yeah, I get that. Me, too. You know, when I paint there's a lot of that. So you're talking about a lot of stuff that's insular, it's kind of self-contained. Are you not thinking about the kinds of things that bring you to make the actions that you make, or to go about [your] process?

LE: I don't know. I thought it would be really cool to be a dancer...(trails off)

ME: Have you looked at professional dancers? I don't know zip about dancing...

LE: Oh, I look at ABT... but I don't dance for them or anything. I'm not that good yet, because I just started ballet, but I've been dancing my whole life. I do Irish, and I do modern, and I do a lot of different types. And I pretty much do it because it's fun.

ME: Anybody else? I know there's a bunch of people in here who can draw; got any influences you can speak of?

K: (quietly) Theatre.

AS: Theatre influences your drawing? Awesome. That's a good answer.

K: Well, no, but...

Group: (laughter)

LI: No, but it sounded good!

ME: But theatre is a thing that you love?

K: Yes.

ME: Okay. I would argue that it might be an influence on your drawing, then....
Because when I was your age I did want to be an artist, but my notion of what art is, was different. If I were asked about my influences, I would have told you that I didn't have any. And When I went to art school, I really resented having to learn about other artists. [I thought] "I'm doing my own artwork. I don't need to know what someone else is doing. In fact, I'm going to be polluted by someone else's ideas". I felt that was just the way it was going to be for me. Because it was up to me to pave this new ground, [and] I didn't want to get jammed up looking at other [people's work]. But what I didn't notice at the time was the art I was making was influenced by all kinds of stuff. And when I started to look at other artists I could see where other people had done the same things. So that was kind of an eye opener.

AS: I think I'm influenced by my friends who draw.

ME: Their drawings? Or just their personalities?

AS: Their drawings. Or the way they draw. Their styles. (quietly) I mean, there are things that I see all the time.

ME: Yeah. I think so for me, too.... When I was a teenager I was really heavily influenced by the music I was listening to, which was punk rock, which I still listen to...

Group: (snickers)

ME: The way that [was influencing me] was that I was drawing a lot of punk rock imagery, so what I was doing there was expressing an interest. But I wasn't going any deeper...Drawing the Black Flag bars on my notebooks. This was an

expression of fandom, you know? ...I would argue that it's not art. It was not an exploration of what that stuff meant to me. It was an expression of how much I loved it. And there was a lot to love, you know...To me, It was very moral music, it was very angry. And it was very much about changing things. And that was something I responded to, and I still appreciate. It was music with a moral compass; it was telling me I had the right to be angry. That still carries on to my art today, but now I'm using that more as an influence. I'm not saying how cool it is by making [art influenced by punk rock].

The following excerpt reveals the beginnings of a recurring theme: The "BodyWorlds vs. La Specola" discussion. While waiting for participants to complete questionnaires I started a conversation about an ongoing exhibition in the nearby city of Atlanta. Everyone became absorbed in a discussion about the exhibit, which featured preserved human bodies. This led to a comparison with traditional Italian wax reproductions of cadavers. The discussion eventually touched on ethical questions raised by the exhibition:

ME: By the way, has anyone gone to see that "Body World" exhibit in Atlanta?

M: yeah

ME: Can you sum it up in one word?

M: (pause) I don't know. Kind of weird.

ME: Kind of weird, yeah. (I explain the exhibition to the class: it's an exhibit of human and animal cadavers. The bodies are preserved using a new technique called "plastination", wherein muscles and vessels are injected with a plastic. The results are highly detailed.)

ME: You end up with these extremely detailed models of people. And whoever put them together, I would say had a sense of humor. Because sometimes there'll be a person's body riding on top of a horse, but they're both preserved so that you can see all the vessels and organs...

TA: With their skin?

ME: Yeah, or the skin has been removed partially. You know, exploded views..

M: Sometimes it's completely removed

ME: Sometimes it's completely removed –yeah! Just the brain and nervous system

TA: Are they varnished or something?

M: They've been dunked in this, I forget what word it is, it starts with a ...

Z: (interrupts) Acrylic?

M: No, It's like a plastic that keeps everything intact...

AS: It's insane.

ME: It is a little insane. I don't really want to go.

AS: I want to go.

TA: Does it smell?

K: Did they use wax or something?

At this point I'm reminded of La Specola, and my preference of it over the exhibition...

ME: You know, they used to. That's how they used to do it. In Italy there is [the exhibition of La Specola], it's basically the same thing but they carved everything intricately out of microcrystalline wax [used for investment wax casting].

[There were] these Old Italian masters who would look at cadavers, and then make reproductions. It looks about the same, but this body art thing is a little less artful.

TA: It's more scientific?

ME: No, I don't think it is. It's just more goofy.

AS: You can see all the organs and stuff?

M: Mm-hmm.

ME: I'll bring the book in.

AS: That's awesome.

[break in conversation]

ME: Can I ask...Who here is an organ donor? Anybody? (laughter)

I mean, as soon as I saw that book, I looked at my license, and I was like, I don't want to end up like that (laughter).

Z: Yeah.

ME: I'll donate my body to science, people can have my eyes when I'm done, but I almost want to put [on my license] "*Not Body Worlds*" (snickers). It just seems a little irreverent in a way I don't respond to. I'll bring the book in. (more laughter).

AS: I'm really curious.

The discussion was continued the next day. I brought along the book (Gunther Von Hagens' *Body Worlds: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies*, 2005) and digital images. I compared the two exhibitions we had discussed, and asked students to notice differences in aesthetic qualities between the two.

Another recurring theme that spontaneously developed during the course concerned the capacity art has to shock or disturb. I created the topic of "shocking art" in

the middle of the course after having addressed the need to shelter the group from certain material. The difficulty of discussing contemporary art without breaching sensitive subject matter was discussed. I realized there was a need to explore the reasons why art was sometimes shocking, so I put together a small collection of controversial artists. I chose Chris Ofili for his use of unusual and offensive material (elephant dung), Jimmie Durham for his apparent glibness (smashing a car with a boulder), and Zbigniew Libera for his controversial “Lego concentration camp” pieces.

The participants by this point in the course had become familiar with each other and were more willing to articulate their opinions about the topic. The subject of shocking art is one that these adolescents were eager to discuss:

ME: Why is contemporary art shocking, anyway?

AS: Because it wants to be.

ME: All right. It wants to be. How come?

AS: Because it wants to be different.

ME: Anybody else? Z? What do you think?

Z: Yeah. That’s sort of the definition of contemporary art-that it’s sort of on the edge. [It tries not to] be like any of the other art that’s out there to impress people. The whole purpose is to make change, and I don’t think you can make change without shocking people.

ME: That’s a really good way to look at it.

AS: I think also its shocking to get people’s attention in this day and age because there’s so much other stuff that everyday people don’t...I guess the art culture is

not like a mainstream culture...Its not on television and it's not in magazines except for art magazines.

ME: How does mainstream culture usually respond to contemporary art? What do you guys think about that?

Z: Usually in the beginning they're sort of against it, but usually people come around when something else comes around that's more shocking after that becomes old news they accept it.

ME: If I had ten years of free time I would do some research on how our society perceives contemporary art, because I think it's really negative.

Z: Yeah.

I showed slides of Duchamp's (1917) *Fountain* and Caravaggio's (1601) *Conversion of St. Paul* to illustrate bygone art controversies (Caravaggio's use of common people to represent the holy), and then moved on to Jimmie Durham's boulder drop work (*Still Life With Stone and Car*, 2004). The Caravaggio discussion led to a recurring theme about Artemisia Gentileschi, which was continued on Day V. Then I showed images of work by Jimmie Durham, along with background information about the artist's involvement in the American Indian Movement. When opening the topic for discussion, the participants immediately picked up on a theme of protest or political reaction in Durham's work. Z's responses indicate fluency and flexibility as he connects new knowledge to an unfamiliar work, and applies it to a critical judgment.

ME: (about Durham) He's very wry. His work is always on that line between being silly and very serious (shows slide of Durham's sculptures, one of which is a chewed stick labeled "Piece of art sculpted by a dog")

M: I think he was trying to be funny by saying the dog sculpted it.

ME: Yeah. I think he was trying to be funny (shows next slide). This is a car that's been crushed by a giant boulder with this goofy face written on it.

GROUP: (laughter)

ME:..And down here it says he picked an American car because he didn't want people to think he was making a political statement about Japanese cars. But what do you think? Was he just being a goof-off?

Z: [considering that he was part of] that Indian organization (AIM), yeah, I think it's probably a statement against the government.

ME: I think you're probably right...

AS: American supremacy. American bourgeoisie lifestyle.

M: It seems more like a prank than a piece of art.

ME: Yep. That's a good point. It is like a prank...

After further discussion of Durham's work, M brought up issues his brother has with experiencing art. His comment is related to those made by the grade school students I observed while student teaching, and I use the opportunity to suggest a depth of meaning may be present in Durham's work. The group is looking at a sculpture made from a rock resting on a smashed mirror. There is a smiling face drawn on the rock:

AS: It seems like 'the unconscious oppressor?' You know, because the rock is smiling.

M: My brother would love this because he's always claiming that art is super-random, and he hates art. He's always saying [he doesn't want to go to an art exhibit] because (speaks in cartoon-like voice) "there's always going to be a picture of a rock with a ring with a leaf on it and they're going to say the rock is depressed or something".

ME: Your brother should take this class!

M: (laughs) And this would just prove his point with the rock on the boat!

ME: Does it though? How do you feel about it? You don't feel the same as your brother?

M: No, that's immediately what I thought when I saw [that sculpture]: the painting of the rock and the thing with a leaf on it.

ME: Well I think [Durham] is going for that exactly. I think he's really playing around with our conception of what art is nowadays, and he's sneaking a message in there. Now, I don't know what the message is with this one, or if there is a message, or if he's just making this poetic statement. You know, "mirror" is a really symbolic thing, and "rock" is symbolic, too. Here's my guess- do you want to hear my guess?

AS: Yes.

ME: He's smashing a lot of man-made stuff with rocks, and I think it's a 'nature versus man' kind of thing. It's like 'rock, paper, scissors'- the rock is more

permanent than the mirror, it's more permanent than the car, and the mirror and the car are two things that symbolize us [Western culture].

In the discussion about controversial/shocking art, the work that clearly affected the participants the most was Zbigniew Libera's (*Concentration Camp*, 1996) sculpture of a concentration camp "play set" for children. The participant's responses were strong, and exposed perspectives that tell the age and maturity of the group. Z, who has relatives who escaped the Holocaust, saw Libera's work as an expose on Nazi propaganda. AS held forth the conceit that information about the Holocaust is "all over the place", going so far as to refer to it as "routine". It's difficult to determine from where this perspective comes; is it the result of recent world history classes or a mistaken understanding of global attitudes concerning WWII? The conversation became a recurring theme that was revisited the next day. The following segment of dialogue comes after the participants become aware of the nature of the work. M and K connect Libera's seemingly absurd use of toys to the gravity of the subject, and form guesses about intent (flexibility). Z contributes some historical information that helps the group along (fluency). He also elaborates on his statements:

K: Oh, wow.

Z: Whoa.

M: Aren't Lego's a childish thing, and [Libera] is using it for something super serious?

Z: He's making light of a serious situation.

ME: That is the big criticism. That he's talking about something that is so sensitive for obvious reasons...There are people alive today who were in the camps, or who escaped them. And here's some guy who made a toy out of that experience, as if people are going to play with it. That's the offensive part. But, why do you think he made it?

K: I think he's trying to make a point, maybe like a memory? Just to show how bad it was?

ME: But why would he choose a kid's toy that we all know [as]-moats and castles and pirate ships and stuff?

K: That's a good question.

Z: Well, in World War Two, Hitler tried to make it seem like everything was going to be great in Germany once he had everyone in the camps.

M: Perhaps he (Liberia) was hyping it up.

Z: [Hitler] was basically brainwashing people into thinking 'oh, this is great-we're finally going to be getting rid of all our problems'. Since Lego makes it seem like it's a happy subject for little kids. It's kind of saying the same statement but possibly that's the whole purpose- to say well this is horrible.

AS: [Maybe] he's saying that the holocaust has been kind of ingrained in our society, it's all over the place. If you wanted to find information about the holocaust, if you wanted to find information about it, hear fictional accounts of it...You can get that everywhere. It's all over the place. So it's almost a routine part of our lives....

ME: So what's he saying about that? Is he pointing that out? Is he criticizing that?

AS: He's criticizing it.

ME: I don't know if that's his intention. I think he *is* criticizing...One of the things [Libera says about this work is] "I'm from Poland, and I'm damaged." This is the result of damage....I think it's not supposed to be funny, and it's not supposed to make light of it either.

I went on to explain how offended I was when I first heard about Libera's sculpture, and then begin to explain how I came to understand it:

ME: Go toy shopping sometime and look at the play sets they have for boys and girls. This was how I was reading [Libera's work] for a while. That this is a riff on the kind of toys you can buy for your young lads-GI Joe and 'Inferno Mountain' and stuff. Machine gun nests...Or video games, too. There are some popular ones now that are World War II scenarios.

Z: "Medal of Honor", "Battlefield" and all that stuff.

ME: Right. You get to be put as an avatar into a game where you're at D-Day. You're storming the beach at Normandy.

Z: I think in the newest "Battlefield" you can also play as the German army.

ME: You can play as the Germans. Yeah, you can.

AS: As Nazis?

Z and M: Yeah.

ME: So I think [Libera] is creeping up on that kind of thinking. But definitely he's a critic here; he's not making light of it. But man, this stuff still bugs me. I mean it has the power to shake me still.

AS: Yeah. It's really powerful.

During that discussion and many others I was impressed by the willingness of the group to discuss the work in a serious and mature manner. Even when confronted by art that presented itself as a joke, the group displayed flexibility by withholding judgment, or acknowledging alternate perspectives. In the following excerpt we discuss a tricky installation by artist Banks Violette (*Untitled*, 2004, *And Fucking Gone*, 2005). Violette uses cliché, adolescent imagery in his installations about obsessive fandom and its consequences. As we look at the slides, the group runs through a range of reactions to the work as they come to an understanding. In particular, Z shows flexibility as he ponders the meaning of the work. M and K come up with some original responses: are they connecting the unusual artwork with preexisting knowledge bases? The group was shown a series of images from an installation: a large drawing, wall paintings, and several sculptural objects in a variety of mediums:

AS: Oh, wow.

M: It's a skull with swords stabbing out of its eyes.

K: That's really good.

ME: Really good?

K: Yeah.

M: Multiple skulls. I mean *multiple* skulls.

ME: Now I think that's a drawing but I'm not sure.

K: Wow.

AS: Is he trying to be humorous?

ME: Humorous? I don't think so.

AS: Is he making fun of death metal or is he really into it?

M: It looks like he's really into it because it looks like he did a lot of detail with that.

Z: But at the same time it seems like too stereotypical an image of it.

AS: Classic.

Z: Yeah.

ME: Like if you were into death metal you might see this and go "Awesome!"

Z: But if you weren't you would see it and be like...(trails off).

AS: "Awesome"(laughs).

ME: This is all part of an installation, okay? Here's another part of it...This is the same exhibit. You guys sort of see what this stuff is?

M: Stalactites? Stalagmites?

ME: They look like stalactites...

M: Whatever they're called.

ME: Okay. And what are they on?

Z: Mike stands.

AS: Mike stands.

M: They're on thingies that keep them up in the air.

AS: Mike stands.

ME: I think it's from a drum kit but yeah, band equipment. Keep in mind that [all this] is in the same room together, it's all one piece of artwork.

Z: I think those are mike stands.

ME: This also...

AS: Same guy?

ME: Same guy. He's very competent.

Z: So it's all one piece?

ME: Well, if you can imagine all this stuff in the same room...It's all made by him.

The group continues to explore the installation photos, including a pennant hung upside down, and an aluminum cast of a rose with fallen "petals".

M: What is that? A squished apple? Leaves!

AS: (dryly) A rose.

K: Was he ever a tattoo artist?

ME: A tattoo artist? I don't know. But it's the same kind of visual information, isn't it?

K: The top picture looks like it could be a tattoo.

ME: That does (changes photo). That does.

M: Absolutely.

ME: And what's this? A unicorn.

M: Melting pony.

ME: It's a unicorn. That's pretty tattoo-ish. And the crying face, kind of airbrushed looking. That's a really interesting connection you just made there.

AS: It's hard for me not to laugh at this stuff.

ME: Because why?

AS: Because it's so cliché.

ME: It's cliché! Who responds to cliché stuff?

Z: (changes the subject to talk about a story he heard about an artist getting a tattoo. This leads to a general discussion about tattoos)

ME: Lets bring it back to the subject... So AS was mentioning clichéd, stereotypical imagery. I think that's intentional. I don't know that he's trying to be funny. Maybe.

From this point I show the rest of the installation photos, and reveal the intent of the artist, which was to call attention to a murder committed by teenagers who claimed to be influenced by heavy metal music. The alleged influence of a heavy metal band on their actions was a component of their legal defense. This information sends the group into a discussion about perceived negative influence of music and video games on youth culture. These issues are exactly the ones addressed by Violette in his installations. It was gratifying to watch representatives of youth culture converse about issues raised by an artist who references their age group specifically. Various court cases of censorship and violence are brought up. The group concludes that a variety of factors probably contribute to suicides or other problems, not music alone:

ME: ...and that's what this guy is getting at, I think. This installation is an attempt to get inside that kind of mindset, and I think that's why he uses the cliché imagery. I mean, it's part memorial, but it's also pretty sappy. You know, the rose with the petals falling, that is a pretty cliché image, the melty unicorn. These

are really powerful things, and I'm pretty sure this exhibition would blow me away a little bit just because its got a mix of being super well rendered and well done...

Z: If you're skilled enough you can make even the most mundane, been-done-before thing seem worthwhile. So I can see someone who most people would describe as mediocre, a mediocre subject like a flower, but he's so good at it.

ME: There's a power in the context, too, maybe. It's a little less mundane when you consider this is an attempt to address a horrible thing that happened.

Personally if I saw this [drawing of the heavy metal-style skull and swords] in a gallery, I'd be like "Oh I'm in the wrong gallery". I'd think this was some gallery for heavy metal art, and I'm going to put in my five minutes, you know? That's just me. But when it's added up with these things, it starts to get more and more interesting to me, you know? It becomes kind of powerful.

Z relates the cliché images in the installation with one of his own drawings, done earlier, of a rose dropping petals. He criticizes himself for choosing a worn out image. This was a sensitive moment for Z. He came to a conclusion about the worth of his own artwork, and so he was a little embarrassed. In my opinion Z arrived at his decision after seeing a successful use of "loaded" subject matter. Z compared his drawing to the art of Violette, who was using basically the same image to a more sophisticated end. It could be said that Z was demonstrating critical thinking skills as he considered the effectiveness of the two pieces of work.

ME: When you use images that are really culturally understood like that, you use them because they immediately tell the story you want [to get across].

Z: Yeah.

ME: A rose with a petal falling is talking about the temporariness of life. And everyone gets that right away.

K: Oh!

ME: Beauty is fleeting and life is short.

K: I thought it was some kind of romance, like somebody died.

ME: Yes, tragedy. Loss of love, love dies. All those things.

The group looks at more views of the installation, before discussing a recurring theme. Saatchi gallery hosted the Violette installation. Saatchi was a recurring theme because the gallery bought a sculpture that was an earlier topic of discussion about materials: a sculpture of frozen blood that melted when workmen unplugged a refrigerator unit...

Sometimes the discussion veered from the intended target. I found these times to be the most challenging. It was difficult to decide whether to allow the new direction to unfold, or reign the discussion back to my intended subject. If I intervened when the topic altered, I risked limiting the group's freedom to come to their own conclusions; if I allowed the group to wander, I risked losing momentum. The following excerpt tracks the group's discussion of a recurring theme: the value of art. I had intended to guide them into a discussion that accepted artist's privilege to earn large sums of money for their efforts. The group had other ideas. In this instance I eventually lessened my

attempts to steer the conversation, as the group discussed the value of art from an economically moral perspective:

...You guys impressed by [the fact that] it's expensive because it's in a museum? I doubt it. You like it or don't based on your personal feelings, right?

Z: Yeah. I've seen plenty of stuff that went for way up in the thousands that I thought, "this isn't worth that".

[break in conversation]

K: Some paintings to me seem to be ridiculously high prices. Like the one that says "*Sheets*" (1973, Ed Ruscha)? I don't have a problem with it, it's a good painting but it doesn't seem to me like it should be worth \$144,000.

M: Yeah.

ME: So, okay. Anybody else?

AS: I don't feel like any painting should be worth...

Z: Yeah. I have to agree with that....

AS: There's all this money in the world, but it's all going to paintings when it could be going to...

ME: Going to Hollywood or developing Disneyworld...

AS: No. So all this money is going into the art world [which is] on this elevated monetary level, when say, undeveloped countries in Africa that are starving and sickly because they can't get their pharmaceuticals for cheap enough, don't have enough money...So their country is in this stricken state of poverty and ill-being...

Z: ...And we're living it up.

AS: Like five million dollars could buy half the country vaccines.

ME: To be sure, there is a lot of disparity in the world.

AS: Yeah. It's so ill balanced [*sic*].

ME: And I bet there are people who would say we should put the brakes on stuff like that in order to fix problems, but I'm not sure that's right. If something like that could happen I'd rather we just put the brakes on Hollywood for two years, maybe [use the money from weapons manufacture] for a year...I believe in the cultural value of art...

Z: Maybe stop paying athletes as much...

This topic enjoyed much conversation during Artlab. It was brought up during Steven Thompson's guest appearance, where he defended the value of art as recognition of works of merit. Participants seemed to respond to situations where they were asked to provide input on ethical perspectives related to value. I view this as an attempt to claim ownership of problems presented by the culture of art. Although no one in the group could "solve" the issues we discussed, each member was empowered by the strength inherent in their contributions to the dialogue. Each voice was heard and considered, each suggestion weighed seriously before judgment was given. The group was very successful during these sessions; the conversation was diplomatic, democratic, and purposeful. During these moments they appeared as a coalition or mini society, not as individuals separated by differing opinion.

I have referred to dialogue as a temporary structure. To think of a meaningful discussion as something constructed by a community of democratic thinkers places emphasis on the learning that happens during that time. Perhaps even though the minutes spent in dialogue are lost, and the particulars forgotten, the essence of the structure

remains. The participants of Artlab spent hours piecing together a structure comprised of ideas and held together by the will of the group. I suggest that the essence of the dialogue is what we take away from the experience: the memory of a collaborative, and in the case of Artlab, earnest effort toward understanding. As a collective, Artlab chose to abide by a simple set of guidelines for civil conversation. Their commitment to the dialogue, even to the point of neglecting studio work shows the level of engagement possible in this type of learning environment.

Findings Part One

As a curriculum, Artlab was a loosely constructed series of aesthetic questions interjected into a running dialogue about art. I tried not to prescribe outcomes of the discussion points, but rather to allow students to make connections by forming opinions about the various issues. The goal of engaging students in aesthetic discussion was met. All of the participants seemed to enjoy speculating, wondering, and offering their opinions about many of the topics we discussed. Like art production, the success of aesthetic dialogue proved difficult to assess. Although I charted responses, pored over audio recordings, and observed enthusiastic participation, it was not possible to concretely connect dialogue with artistic production. I believe that data collected during Artlab suggests that aesthetic dialogue is an effective way of drawing students into close relationships with art. The group experienced effects such as a sense of solidarity, sense of serious purpose, and sense of democracy (by this I mean each participant was a contributor of equal worth). The Artlab group explored various issues through the filters of each member's experience and perspective. In turn, each group member contributed

positively to the ongoing dialogue. That no final answers were agreed upon speaks to the success of the dialogue; aesthetics is about pondering questions. It is my belief that the participants of Artlab left the course prepared to ask questions first when confronted by challenging ideas or new concepts.

The following observations about Artlab arose from my observations and data collection:

Participants shared certain initial opinions

On the pre-course questionnaires, most of the participants indicated they believed “art” could be a very broad definition. All but one participant indicated there was no such thing as “bad” art, or that the question was unanswerable:

A: Good art is genuine and true, but that is rare

L: There is no wrong way to do art.

K: I think art is what you interpret it to be.

Z: There is no bad art, just art with less meaning than other art.

M: I don’t know.

In the pre-course questionnaires most participants indicated they did not have a clear idea of how to define “contemporary art”. Two students expressed ideas of what the term means:

Z: Non-mainstream, anything besides traditional sculpture or painting.

A: Art made now.

Participants brought their own knowledge bases and preexisting judgments to the dialogue.

Each participant seemed to draw upon his or her existing knowledge base while contributing to a given discussion. This was evidenced by student's use of anecdotal narratives or citations from sources outside the classroom.

Students sometimes changed their preexisting opinions based on the dialogue.

Participants discussed Artwork

Each participant engaged in discussion about artwork, artists, or related topics.

Some students resisted change.

Participants increased the frequency of their responses during the two weeks.

During the two-week course, each participant increased the frequency of his or her responses during class time. The responses were assessed by counting responses and through criteria that specified the type of response (question, to peer or instructor, aside, or elaboration of topic).

Evidence of creative traits seemed to increase in all students to varying degrees.

Each participant increased his or her use of one or more of the targeted traits during the course. The main focus areas were in the areas of dialogue and production. These results were mixed. Some students stagnated by showing no trait improvement in one area but showed clear improvement in the other.

Students used critical thinking skills by conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication.

Discussion tended to focus on the instructor.

Contrary to expectations, much of the group's dialogue was centered on the instructor. While participants took turns weighing in on issues and sharing knowledge, the tendency was to address me. This observation is not well recorded in the response graphs because I reserved the section of responses "to me" for comments that seemed directed to me personally, and not offered to the group. In other words, the participants held a group discussion, but seemed to direct most responses to the perceived "head" of the group. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, I found it difficult to refrain from leading the group toward decisions based on my own judgments. When presenting a concept or work of art, I tended to reserve the right take on the role of "expert" in contrast to the group of "novices". This dichotomy was sometimes necessary in order to clarify facts, but sometimes I failed to allow the group time to form its own conclusions. I was more successful when I recognized a valid (but differing) direction in the conversation, and allowed it to run its course.

Participants connected artwork to various contexts during discussion.

Group members made associations to personal, historical, and visual culture contexts while engaged in aesthetic conversation. They shifted easily between contexts and perspectives. This was interesting, as some of the work I showed referenced several contextual positions. In particular, this can be evidenced in the discussion of Zbigniew Libera's sculptural work that references visual culture (it closely resembles a LEGO set), history (the memory of Nazi concentration camps), and art world concepts like irony and mimesis.

Findings Part 2

The portion of the research that sought to connect the enhancement of creative traits in dialogue to studio production yielded inconclusive results. The reasons for this may have to do with a combination of factors: The course was not long enough. Only one member was able to realize more than two projects, and most did not complete a single project, rather they worked sporadically between two ideas. The majority of each class time was taken up with discussion, while the remainder, which was set-aside for studio time, was often spent “decompressing” from the rigors of discussion. Members used the time to talk casually with each other during this time, which cut into production. When talking was discouraged, members seemed agitated and tense, and did not attend to their work better than when speaking was allowed. I determined that production time talking seemed beneficial, and only stepped in to redirect students if they were not engaged in their projects. As a result, participants did not produce much in the way of completed projects, or any significant series of works. This fact suggests a high degree of involvement in the discussion. Most participants attended high schools with an average of 25 students per class, and were probably unused to group discussions as an educational method. Certainly they were not accustomed to critical discussions about contemporary art that lasted up to two hours at a time!

All students did attempt to solve their creative problems in at least two different ways. To solve a creative problem by trying more than one solution was a course requirement. While disappointing from a curriculum developer’s point of view, this can be seen as a valuable piece of information; It is not possible to accurately determine whether a creative action or thought has been influenced by discussion, or if it has come

about “spontaneously”, etc. I have additional concerns about the very small sample size and similar backgrounds of most participants.

As the course progressed, all participants increased their number of responses, elaborations, and questions. Some increase in response was expected after the first day, when participants were unfamiliar with each other, and did not know what to expect from the course or the instructor. However, It’s my belief that the number of responses grew as they did for these reasons: 1. The class was structured in such a way as to welcome feedback and comments without fear of incorrect responses. Students were made aware from the beginning of the course that no consensus might be reached. It is interesting to note that the majority of students agreed on certain key topics, such as the question “what constitutes value in art”, and “what is the ‘right way’ to make art”.

Another factor that may have influenced the growth of responses during the Artlab project was that I actively sought to elicit thoughtful, considered feedback from the students. I tried not to guide them towards answers I expected or felt were “correct”. This technique sometimes had the effect of derailing the conversation from its intended destination. These sidetracks were anticipated as phenomena common to the act of discussion. Often, the sidetracks led to interesting topics of relevance, but sometimes they trailed off into dead ends or cul-de-sacs. It was sometimes difficult to bring the conversation back to the original topic if the group was excited about the new topic. I had fair success bring the discussion back to the original if I could connect the two, and I didn’t try to rush.

One of the most interesting developments of the course was the phenomenon of recurring themes. The group tended to cycle among topics, returning to them over the

course of two weeks. I designed the course with certain themes in mind, specifically the relatedness of fine art and popular culture, especially music. This was done because I felt music was a good way to utilize existing knowledge bases (there are many artists who make work relating to popular culture, and the reverse is true), and because the art world can be seen as a mirror of popular culture. This led me to connect Artlab with Wiki. Another theme present throughout the curriculum was the question of value in art. This theme was intentionally introduced to the course because I found it relevant and controversial, and therefore good fertilizer for dialogue. Something I didn't count on was the way the group returned to some of these themes, and often used them to connect one topic to another.

Pre/post questionnaire comparisons

Questionnaires were given to participants on the first and last day of the course. The questions in the first questionnaire were designed to allow me a feel for participant's existing knowledge bases and interests. The second set of questions, given on the last day repeated some questions to probe for attitudinal changes and growth of knowledge bases. Since the majority of students came to the class with knowledge of contemporary art, the answers did not change dramatically for any of them. An interesting bit of data emerged from the first questionnaire: All of the group members who answered the question "what is good or bad art" had essentially the same answer. Everyone agreed from the start that there was no wrong way to make art, although some attached criteria to the answer, making it more or less concrete.

CHAPTER VI

Final projects-results

All participants were encouraged to complete more than one paper-based project using a piece of (provided) literature as a starting point. The idea was to allow students to carry out an idea on paper, and then make another project based on the successes of the first. It was hoped that with each new investigation the student would bring the project further away from the source material, and closer to a personal creative expression. Initially this approach had mixed results. Some participants began with highly original ideas: “K” planned to make a double portrait of the character from *Secret Observations on the Goat Girl*; how “K” pictured her before and after she read the story. “LI” began her project based on the same story. She decided on an image of an egg to represent perceived themes of perfection and imperfection in the literature. “M” was another participant who did not reference the material in any discernable way. “M” seemed to attempt to fit drawings of characters he was already comfortable drawing into the scheme of the project. He also was unable to describe the poem he chose when questioned. “Z” chose to illustrate literally some key themes from his chosen story, *In the Reign of Harad IV*. “AS” chose to recreate the symbolic gates from her chosen story, *Before the Law*.

Each participant with the exception of “Z” was able to complete at least two pieces of work for the final critique. To my observation, all participants were more engaged in the dialogue portion of the class than with studio production (a breakdown of each participant’s output can be found in the addendum).

Results: Field recording project

All participants completed their field recording projects. As with the primary project, this one yielded mixed results. All participants chose still photography as their means of recording their projects. "AS" shot a photo essay of a series of local graffiti tags which read "Break your heart open". "M" and "LI" both documented flowers growing in their respective neighborhoods. "K" brought in a single image of the night sky captured on her cell phone camera. "Z" created a very competent essay of images taken at a local horse farm.

Final critiques

In the final critiques the participants were "given the floor" in order to explain their projects. For the literary projects I asked students to discuss the successes and failures of each attempt. Interestingly, while the group members were comfortable around each other by this point, no one spoke about their projects easily. Despite my efforts to reduce stress during the critique, everyone appeared nervous, and needed prompts and encouragement to carry on. It is also interesting that the frank critical atmosphere that defined group discussion was absent here. I believe this was an indication of a successful and positive dialogue group. During the critique a sense of reverence was maintained; each member was given a chance to speak, and all were treated with respect. At no point did the discussion disintegrate into petty criticism. On the other hand, the pervading attitude of respect may have influenced group members to keep any uncomfortable comments to themselves. I tried to ask probing questions such as: If you could continue this project with an unlimited budget and no time restraints,

what do you think you might do, or, Can you tell us what you were thinking when you switched from one method of expression to the next?

Potential applications

The forms of dialogue recommended by Burbules and Bohm served the purposes of Artlab very well. According to evaluations filled out for the Lyndon House, participants considered the course a meaningful experience. Participants may not have left the course with a precise definition of contemporary art, but I believe all of them came away empowered by a sense of involvement in the things we discussed. Overall, participants connected to the material, and found it relevant and of interest.

It is my feeling that aesthetic discussion is crucial to understanding art. Without asking questions about artwork we limit our curiosity, sense of discovery, and ultimately our willingness to understand each other. When aesthetic conversation works as it did in Artlab, it serves to enrich and expand student's educational experience. Think of the good that might result if students leave school with critical thinking skills, and a willingness to apply them to their lives! Learning dialogue alone is a useful skill, even if it's not applied to abstract concepts or intellectual puzzles. The democratic process of inquiry described by authors such as Burbules and Bohm could benefit students in any discipline.

Using dialogue as a pedagogical tool would likely involve restructuring curriculum. I have introduced discussion about aesthetics and criticism to high school classes with mixed results. Huge class sizes, dramatic differences in maturity among

students, and time constraints are a few of the problems I have encountered. However, I have also observed the same levels of involvement and progress among public school populations as I did in the smaller Artlab sample. I have no doubt that students will gain from the opportunity to engage themselves in discussions about their course material.

The Lyndon House has invited me to teach another Artlab course. Given this second opportunity, I will allow the course to be devoted more exclusively to the dialogue, and not attempt to split time evenly between discussion and production. Of course, each group of participants will be different, and class dynamics may differ greatly from class to class, but I expect similar engagement in the material no matter the students. It is true that participants at Lyndon House courses pay for the experience, and so I can count on a certain level of interest to begin with. However, I feel dialogue-centered learning can and should be a very effective tool in a general education setting.

I currently teach an art class in a high school setting. The school is part of an alternative education program that serves students who have been removed from the general student population for violating the school codes of conduct. Many of the students have been removed for serious offenses such as assault and battery or weapon and drug possession. Despite the difficulties involved in teaching this group, I have introduced elements from Artlab into my art curriculum there. I found success with a few modifications to the course. I address time issues by initially shortening the amount of group discussion to fifteen minutes, and placing the time allotted for group discussion at the beginning of the (90 minute) class. This may seem like a very short amount of time, but there is a need for brevity when dealing with this population. I also keep track of responses on "tickets", which I punch when a student responds to an issue, question, or

image. The student with the most punches at the end of the week receives a prize of extra art supplies. Students come to the art class at various maturity levels. For this reason I limit controversial works of art discussed to suit the atmosphere of the group. Large class sizes make discussion difficult, and class management is crucial. Explaining the “rules” of conversation often is necessary. I find that even with the number of constraints in place when attempting aesthetic dialogue in this setting, some students respond with engagement much similar to the participants in Artlab.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Forms

Lyndon House Consent Form

This document is to verify the approval of the “Artlab Qualitative Case Study” research project (Mr. Anthony Wislar, lead researcher; Dr. Richard Siegesmund, supervising researcher) by the Lyndon House Arts Center, of Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department. Lyndon House Arts Center recognizes that “Artlab Qualitative Case Study” is a research project associated with the University of Georgia Art Education department, and that it will involve minors as research participants. All participants will be required to provide consent before participating in the research portion of the project. By giving consent, participants will be agreeing to allow researchers to audiotape conversations and read writing generated during the project. “Artlab Qualitative Case Study” is a research project without foreseeable risks to participants. All information gathered for the project will be confidential, with participant’s names or other personal information removed from any writing resulting from the study.

Lyndon House Arts Center recognizes that the research conducted by Anthony Wislar is related to his course of study as an art education Master student at the University of Georgia. The Lyndon House will allow the research to take place for the duration of the project, from June 19-23 and June 26-30, 2006.

Signature of Lyndon House Administrator

Date

Parental Permission Form

I agree to allow my child, _____, to participate in a research study titled "ArtLab", which is being conducted at the Lyndon House Arts Center during the summer arts camp of the same name. The instructor for the course, Mr. Anthony Wislar (a graduate student from the Art Education Department at the University of Georgia), will be conducting this research to complete his Masters of Art Education degree at the University of Georgia under the direction of his faculty supervisor, Dr. Richard Siegesmund (706-542-1647). My child's participation in the research study is voluntary and does not directly affect his or her ability to participate in the summer camp. I do not have to allow my child to participate in this study if I do not want to. My child can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have the information related to my child returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to look for connections between discussions about art, art production, and creative development. Ultimately, the data from the research will go toward developing effective teaching strategies.

Students who take part in this study may improve their creative potential, artistic skills, or critical thinking ability.

ArtLab is a course that allows students to explore various philosophies and conditions of contemporary art through discussion. The research last the duration of the course, two weeks, three-hour long daily sessions, excluding weekends. If I allow my child to take part, my child

will be asked to participate in discussions about contemporary art themes in visual arts, visual culture, and literature. I understand that my child will be asked to read articles and other literature relating to the course, and create artwork in response to certain class lessons. Mr. Wislar may ask to read reflections written by my child in his/her journal about the class. Mr. Wislar will document the class periodically by photographing student at work. Mr. Wislar will also record class discussions on audiotape. The only people to see the photographs and/or listen to the audiotapes will be Mr. Wislar, Dr. Siegesmund, and two other UGA faculty members at UGA who are reviewing the research. Student's names will not be included with the photographs, and all transcripts from the audiotape will not refer to students by name.

The research is not expected to cause any harm or discomfort. My child will not be required to participate in any discussions or share personal thoughts if he/she feels any discomfort or anxiety. No risks are expected in this study.

Any information collected about my child will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. My child's identity will be coded, and all data will be kept in a secured location. The audiotape will be destroyed one year after the project's completion.

Mr. Wislar will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at (706) 552-1261 or email anthonywislar@yahoo.com. I may also contact the supervising professor, Dr. Richard Siegesmund, at (706) 542-1647 or email rsieg@uga.edu. Or I may contact Madeline Darnell, Director of Education at the Lyndon House Arts Center at (706) 613-3623, or email md36@ureach.com.

I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

_____ Anthony Wislar

Name of Researcher/Teacher _____

Telephone: (706) 552-1261

Signature

Date

Email: anthonywislar@yahoo.com

Name of Parent or Guardian

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies-keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your child's rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail IRB@uga.edu.

Minor Assent Form

Dear Student,

You are invited to participate in a research project related to the course "Artlab" at the Lyndon House Arts Center this summer. The research will help me learn about how students come to understand art through discussion. It will also help me determine a connection between talking about art subjects, and making art projects.

If you decide to be a part of this research project while at the Lyndon House, you will allow me to discuss your artwork and thoughts you have about art presented in the course. You will also be allowing me to read any journal entries you make as part of the class. Additionally, you will be giving me permission to record discussions that happen during the course on audiotape. Your participation in Artlab will not affect your ability to participate in other summer camp classes at the Lyndon House Arts Center. Your participation will be kept confidential-I will not use your name or personal information on any papers I write about this research project.

Your participation in this project may improve your artistic abilities as well as your thinking skills. It is my hope that this research may also benefit future art education programs.

If you have any questions or concerns you may feel free to ask me or call my supervisor, Dr. Richard Siegesmund, at 706-542-1647, or Madeline Darnell at the Lyndon House Arts Center at 706-613-3623.

Sincerely,

Anthony S. Wislar
Graduate Student in Art Education
University of Georgia

I understand the project described above. My questions have been answered and I agree to participate in this project. I have received a copy of this form.

Signature of participant

Date

Please sign both copies-keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your child's rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-mail IRB@uga.edu.

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION/ SAFE WEB USE

Dear Parent or Guardian,

During the course of the art seminar, ArtLab, your student will be asked to discuss and reflect upon contemporary art practices, methods, and philosophies. Works of art presented to or discussed by the class will not contain offensive or explicit content.

However, you should be aware that some contemporary art does contain strong content that should be viewed by a mature audience. If your student chooses to research any art topics relating to contemporary art themes, he or she may encounter works of art with strong or shocking content.

I recommend that you monitor your child's research, especially internet use.

Here are some helpful hints for safe internet practices:

1. Set guidelines about internet use that you and your child agree upon.

2. Monitor your child's internet activity
3. Check your Internet Browser's security options for blocking mature content.

If you have any questions about any course content, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Anthony Wislar

ADDENDUM I

Trait Tables

Z

Week One Dialogue/**Production**

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility	X	< X		
fluency	X X	<		
originality		X X		
elaboration	X<	X		

Z

Week Two Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility	X	X		
fluency	X X			
originality	X X			
elaboration	X	X		

Studio project choice: *In the Kingdom of Hadad IV*

“Z” improved his response rates and willingness to expand a given idea (elaboration) from the middle of week one. This improvement continued into the middle of week two, when it settled. Z’s verbal willingness to further the ideas behind his studio project reflected flexibility and originality, but since his ideas were only discussed hypothetically, and not realized, the scores for those traits show up under the “dialogue” tables as improving. Z did very well translating his assigned reading into a studio

project. His drawing was not a literal illustration of the text, and tried to stylistically mimic the unreal, illusionary qualities of the story. In my opinion, his artwork reflected a desire on his part to correctly capture some major themes of the story. Z did not indicate any personal connection to the subject matter beyond an interest in the genre (the story is vaguely science fiction). As Z's interactions with his peers increased, his "flexibility" in dialogue scores increased. Z was a slow but steady worker in the studio, preferring to work on a single drawing for the duration. He took the drawing home, but his additions to it outside of class time were negligible. Z's field recording was a well-realized series of photographs with strong compositions. He followed through with his original idea with no changes in concept over the two weeks. This adds fluency to his score, but not flexibility or elaboration. Z improved his use of elaboration in discussion, but did not increase his score for the same category in studio production.

M

Week 1 Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility			X X	
fluency		X	X	
originality		X	X	
elaboration		X<	X	

M

Week 2 Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility		XX		
fluency		XX		
originality		X		
elaboration		X		

Studio project: "The King" by Mark Strand

"M" increased his responses a good deal over the class duration, but since many of his elaborations were also in the form of asides, this did not improve his overall score. M became more willing to explain his answers as the course went on. He demonstrated flexibility and originality when he decided to make his second production piece a three dimensional sculpture. He fell back on his earlier drawing subjects, however; a clownish cartoon face which he had adopted as a personal signature or logo. M was unable to

verbally connect his drawing choices with the literature he chose. From his responses, it is not clear whether he read the poem he chose as his starting point. M made some improvements in his flexibility in dialogue. For example, during week two when disagreeing with an artist's methods, he did not place himself in the role of judge, but instead commented on how the art was something his brother would have hated.

M rarely volunteered an opinion during Artlab. He often would refuse to answer unless I gave him a choice between two responses. He would then choose one, and not elaborate on his reasons. M's field project was the same as L's; a photo essay of garden flowers in his yard. This choice was not very original, and did not exhibit the sense of exploration I hoped to inspire with the project. He did not investigate his subjects in any way beyond making an initial decision to photograph them. This lack of apparent interest in his assignment was obvious during the final critique.

AS

Week 1 Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility	XX			
fluency	X X			
originality		XX		
elaboration	X	X<		

AS

Week 2 Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility	X X			
fluency	XX			
originality		X X		
elaboration	XX			

Studio project *Before the Law*, Franz Kafka

“AS” engaged with the course from its start, and contributed much to each discussion. She was already familiar with a good deal of contemporary art, and had an interest in philosophy. These factors added to her fluency score, as she was willing and able to integrate past knowledge to new situations. AS displayed flexibility in the way she adapted her knowledge base, but was not as successful tolerating views of others that differed from her own. While she was polite, she seldom relaxed a contrary opinion, or

conceded to another's perspective. For this reason in the first week she scored in the "low" section of "excellent" in the category of flexibility. Her ideas had a degree of originality, but clearly drew from an existing knowledge base of Western art. As was willing and able to make changes in her studio approaches to the literary problem. Mainly, her solutions hovered around the problem of how to best represent the theme she had chosen (a wall with doors) and did not stray from her original idea of using the most obvious metaphorical image from the story. Her willingness to pursue different avenues in the creative project earned her excellent scores in the areas of flexibility and fluency. She also exhibited these qualities in conversation, but this was especially the case in the sub-category of fluency. AS was one of two students who decided to take the studio project into three dimensions, and not stay in the relatively safe area of drawing.

K

Week one Dialogue/Production

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility		X< X		
fluency		X	X<	
originality	X	X		
elaboration		X X	X	

K

Week two Dialogue/**Production**

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility	X	X		
fluency		X X		
originality	X X			
elaboration		X X		

Studio Project: *Secret Observations on the Goat Girl*, Joyce Carol Oates.

K's shy disposition made her a consistently low scorer in discussion responses. For the same reason, her trait chart reflects low scores for elaboration and fluency in the area of dialogue. However, K did make improvements by slightly increasing her elaborations in class. She also contributed some interesting sidetracks that ended up enhancing the dialogue. K made two drawings related to her story choice. The first one was highly original in concept; a depiction of a main character as K perceived her before reading the

story, and then after. It was essentially two contrasting portraits of the goat girl character. I found this to be a highly inventive and novel approach that was unencumbered by a sense of what was expected of her. Unfortunately, K misplaced this original drawing. Her second attempt was also very inventive, and reflected K's own interests more than her original drawing. The work was well realized, and I was pleased that it strayed away from the "starting point" of the original story. K's field project was also very unusual. She had wrestled with the idea of photographing stars at night with an ordinary hand held camera. Without a telephoto or wide-angle lens and tripod, the likelihood of capturing a discernable image of the night sky seemed slim. I had advised her to try it anyway and see what happened, even if the results were not what she had hoped. As a teacher, I hoped that a new direction would come from it. K surprised me on the final critique by showing us all an image of a dark sky, streetlight and star captured on her cell phone, which had a digital camera function. K was a little ambiguous about the reasons behind her choice to use the phone, but regardless of her motivations, it was a captivating final piece.

LI

Week One Dialogue/**Production**

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility		XX		
fluency		X < X		
originality		XX		
elaboration		X < X		

LI

Week Two Dialogue/**Production**

trait	excellent	fair	poor	
flexibility		XX		
fluency	X X			
originality		XX		
elaboration		XX		

Studio Project: *Secret Observations on the Goat Girl*, Joyce Carol Oates.

“LI” showed initial promise in improving much of her scores along the trait categories. Unfortunately, LI missed four days of the second week, and therefore did not provide the data pool with enough information to see much in the way of results. As the first week progressed, LI seemed to become more comfortable with her new peers, and so her answers carried more elaborations and questions. From the start LI was interested in discussing artists and seemed to empathize with them (see “Duchamp”). LI often seemed uncertain how to answer questions that asked her to reveal her opinion, but she had a

good disposition and was not intimidated by her peers. LI's studio projects were autobiographical, but she made an effort to relate her work to the literature. Like M, LI used flowers in her yard as the subject for her "field recording project". LI has access to a professional camera, and expressed an interest in becoming a photographer. Her photographs were very well composed and shot. Also like M, however, she did not attempt to go out on a limb with this project, but instead chose to play it safe. For these reasons, LI received higher scores in fluency in the "production" category. LI's scores stay fairly consistent due to her absences. I feel that if she had attended more sessions her scores would have reflected greater improvement.

ADDENDUM II

Trait Assessment Rubrics

Flexibility: Excellent- considered new perspectives (changed point of view, conceded to a more plausible interpretation, tries numerous alternate materials or techniques), demonstrated open-mindedness, sought alternative explanations to problems.

Flexibility: Fair- demonstrated enough flexibility to maintain a democratic conversation (not argumentative), but refrained from accepting or embracing new or differing ideas. Tries a variety of approaches to solving studio problems.

Flexibility: Poor- rigid, argumentative or derisive. Not responsive to conversation. Participant withdraws from discussion. Participant does not engage in studio production.

Fluency: Excellent- Applies previous knowledge and experience to discussion/production. Applies knowledge gained during one discussion (or session) to another.

Fluency: Fair- Participant is involved in conversation, contributes to topics/ effectively uses studio materials during production.

Fluency: Poor- Participant does not follow conversation or can't/won't properly manage studio materials. Participant withdraws (is silent).

Originality: Excellent- Participant makes unusual and/or insightful connections to the material. Participant introduces new ideas to conversation or production.

Originality: Fair- Participant introduces new ideas to conversation/production.

Elaboration: Excellent- Participant puts forth effort to fully realize a topic or creative solution. May clarify a point or offer insight on other's remarks. In production, participant may rework or enhance a concept in terms of design, technique, quantity or any other aspect that suggests a continuation of ideas. Tries several project ideas.

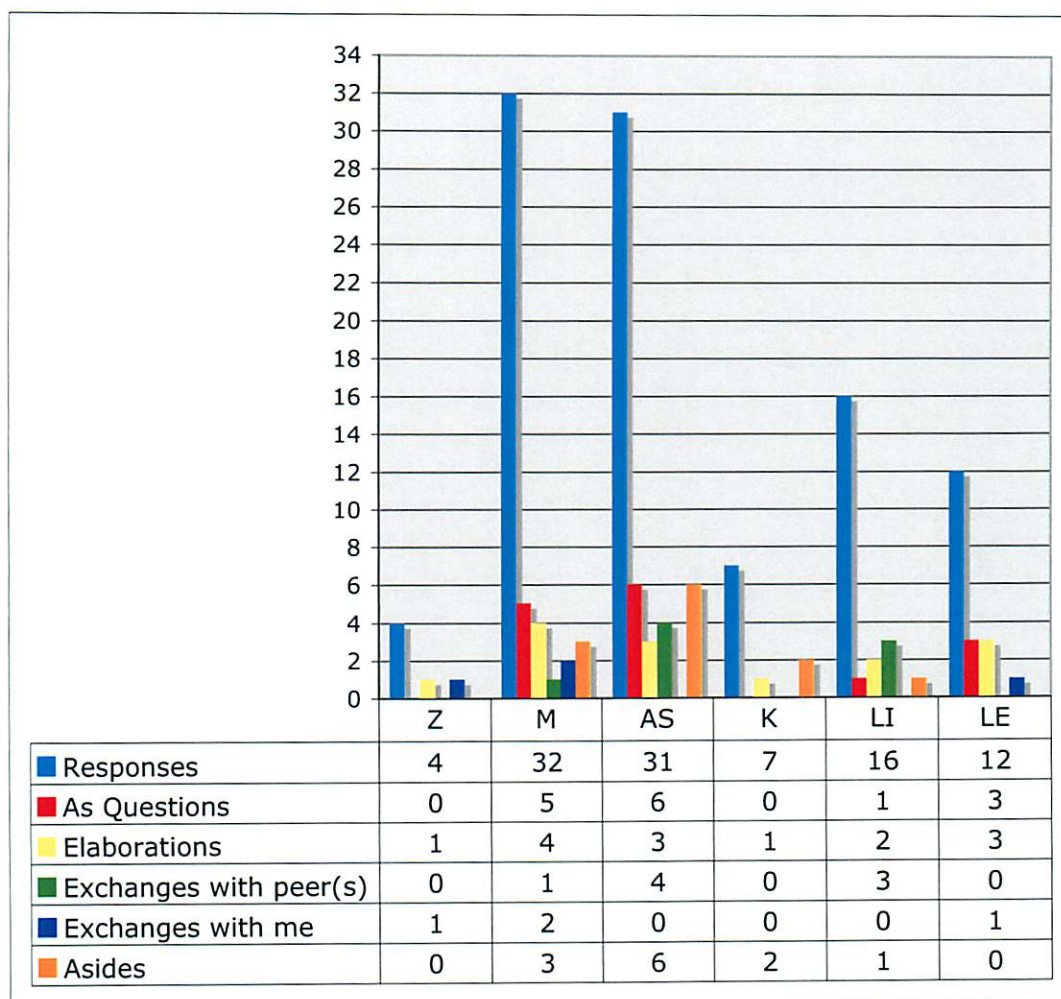
Elaboration: Fair- Participant clarifies a point when questioned. May add to a discussion by offering agreement or a challenge to a given topic. Completes a studio project. Tries more than one draft of a studio idea.

Elaboration: Poor- Participant is unable/unwilling to clarify a statement, etc.

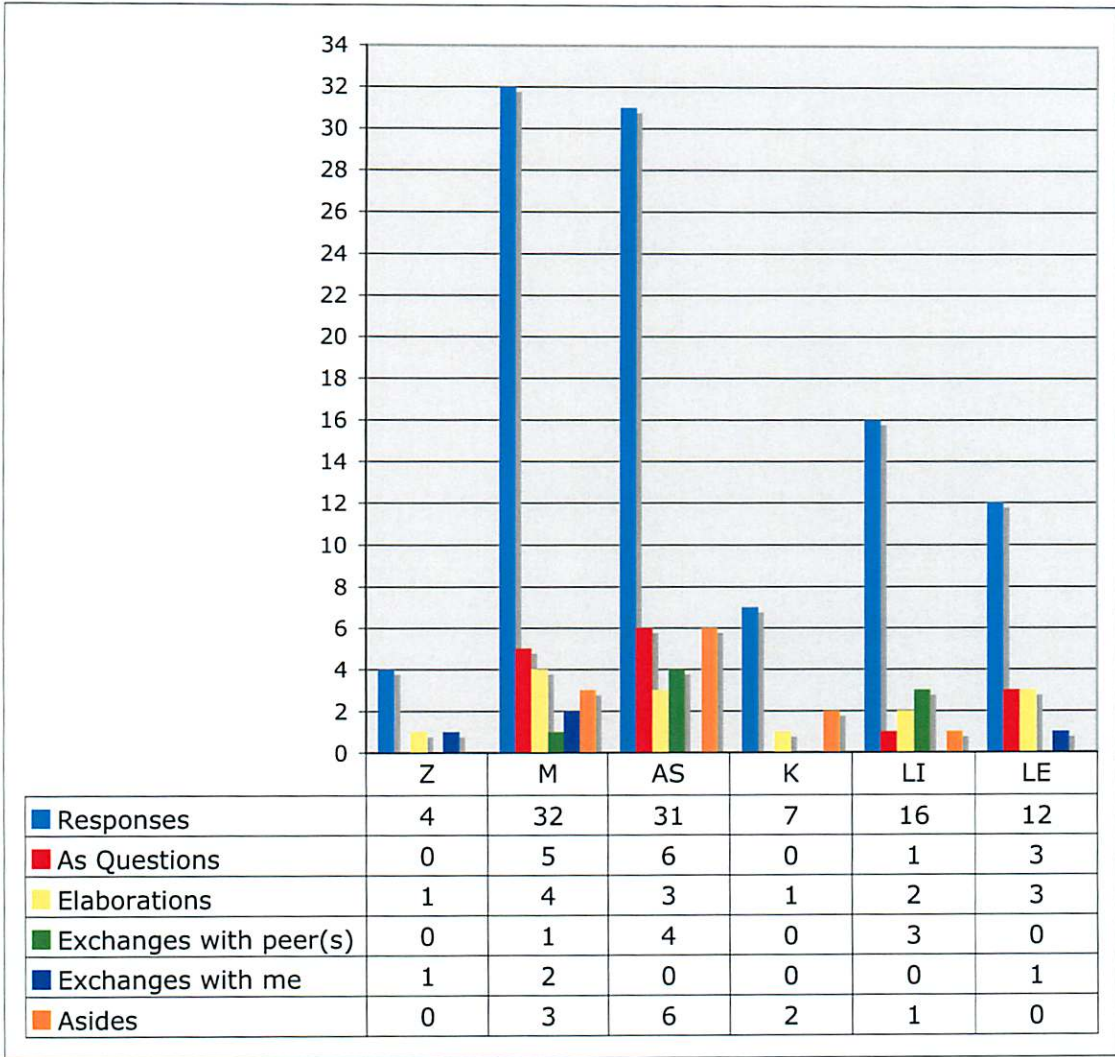
Participant does not finish a studio project.

ADDENDUM III

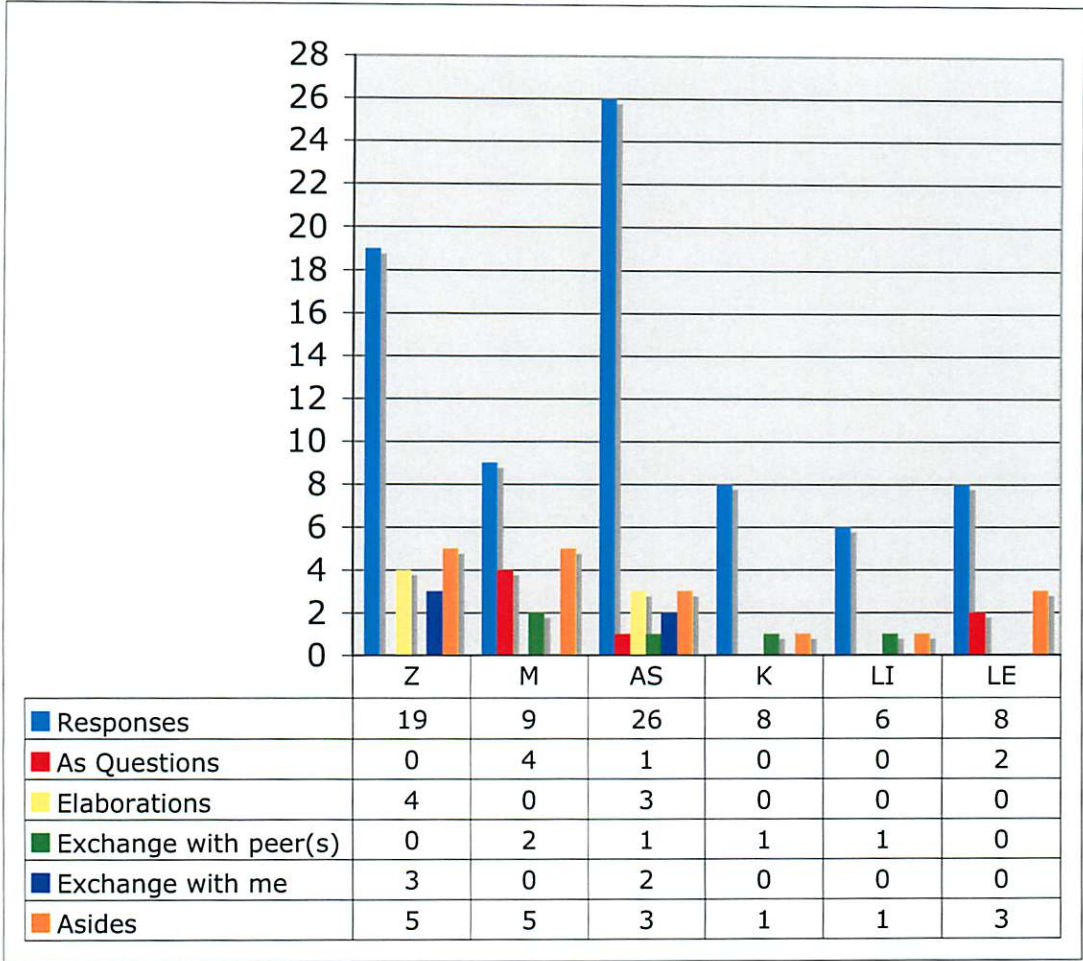
Response Graphs (note scale changes)



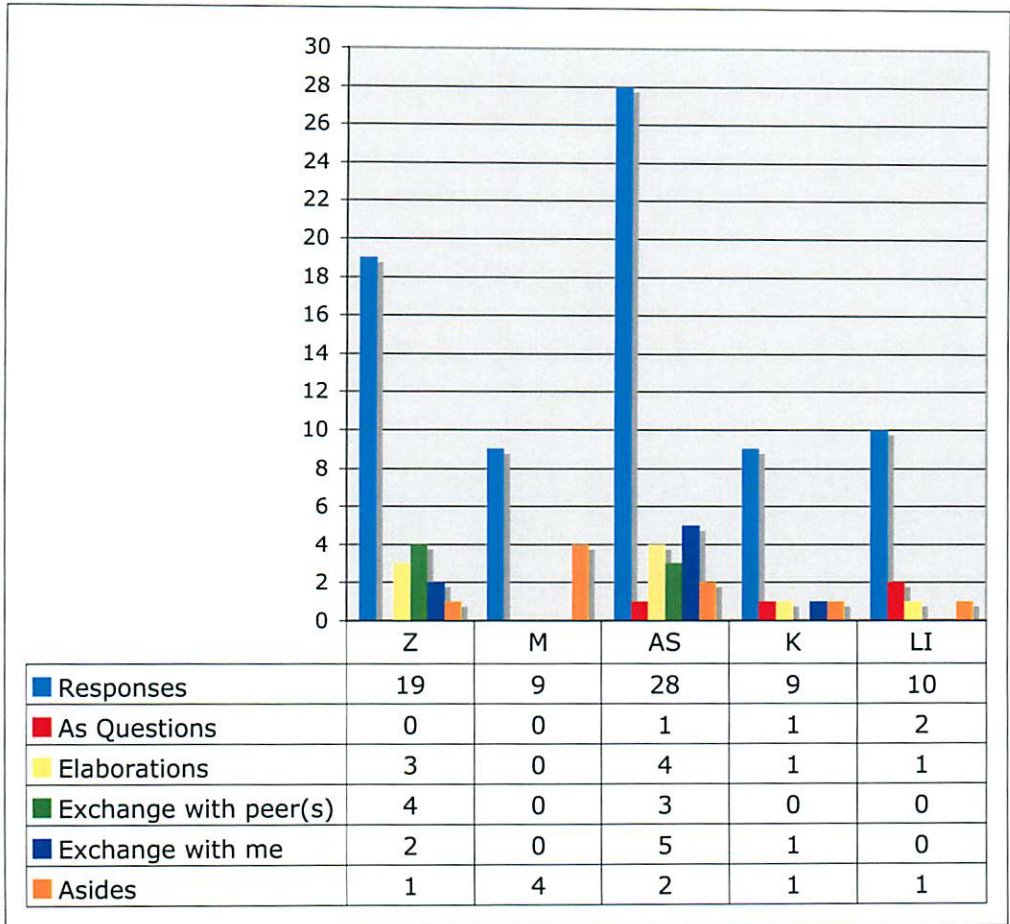
Day One



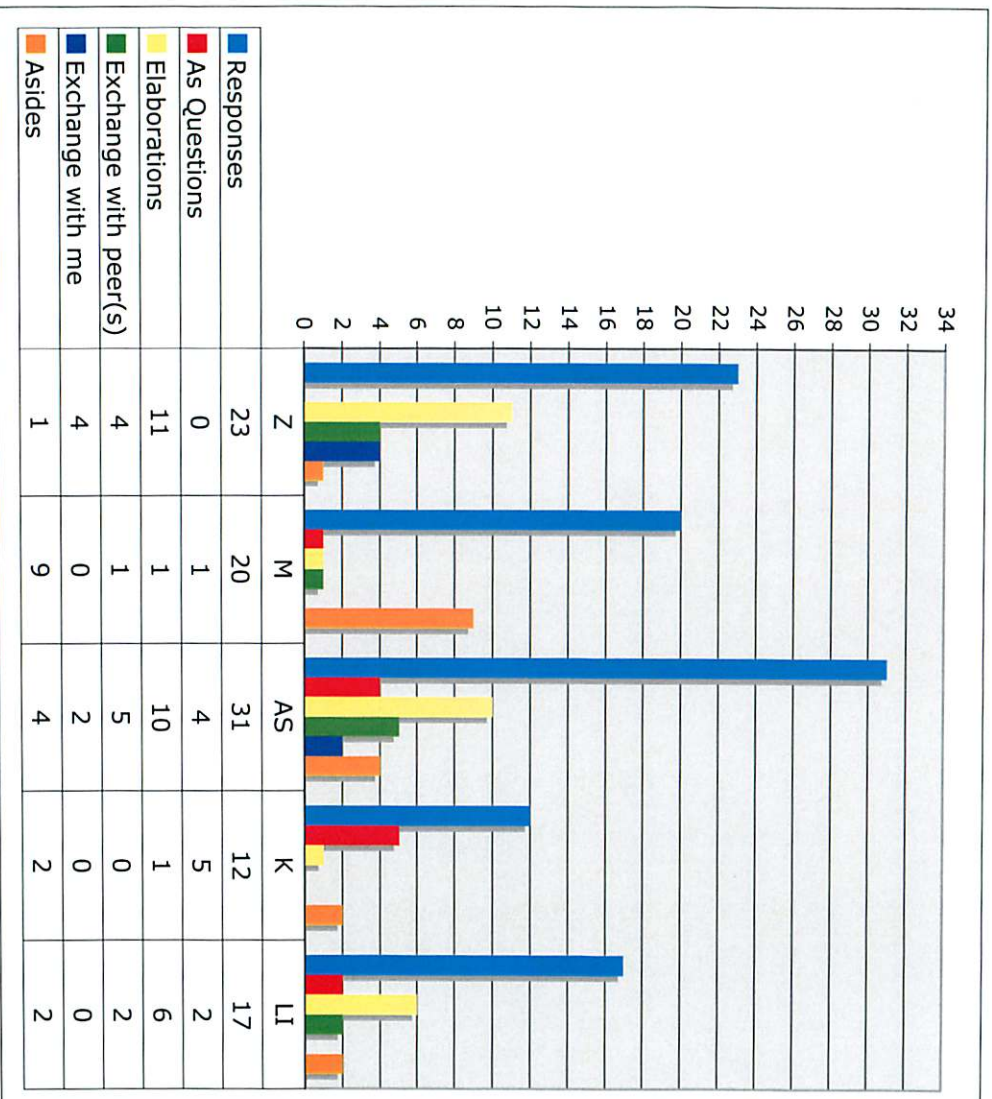
Day Two



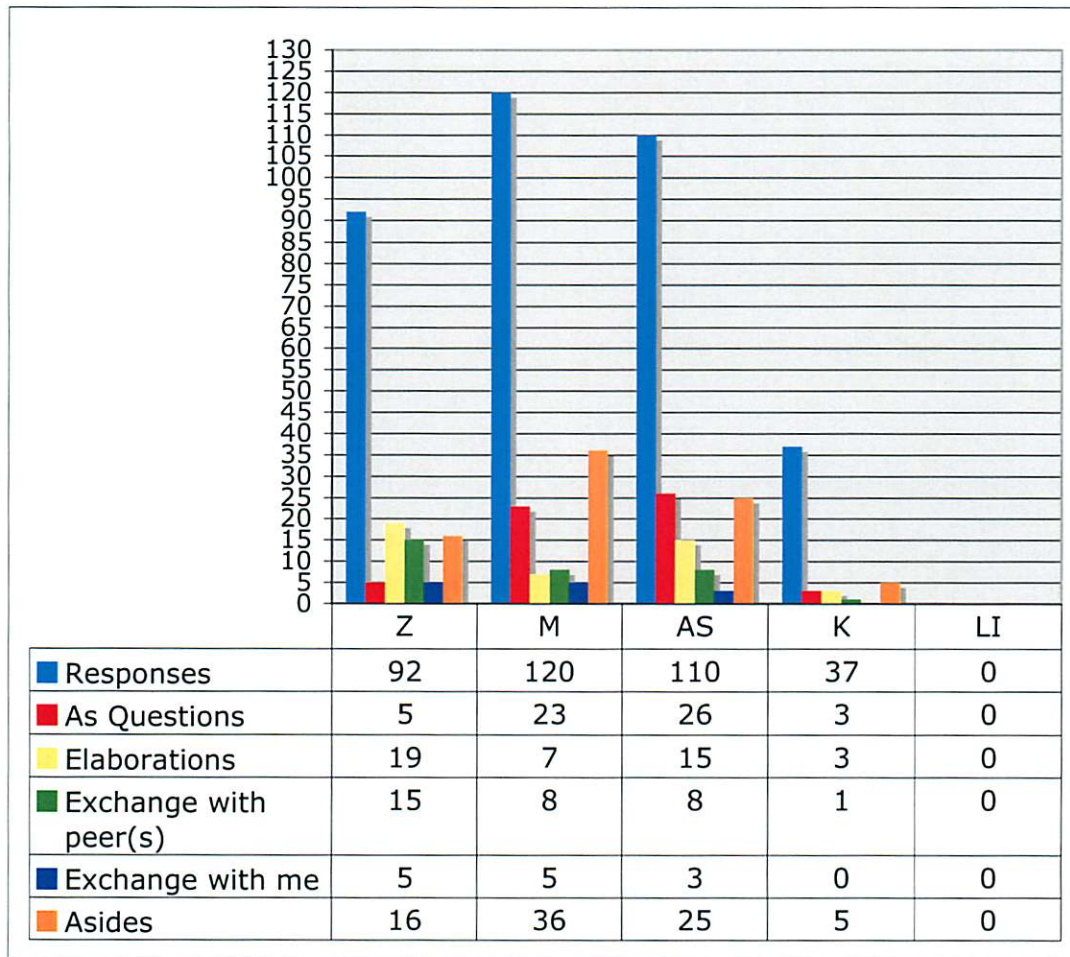
Day Three



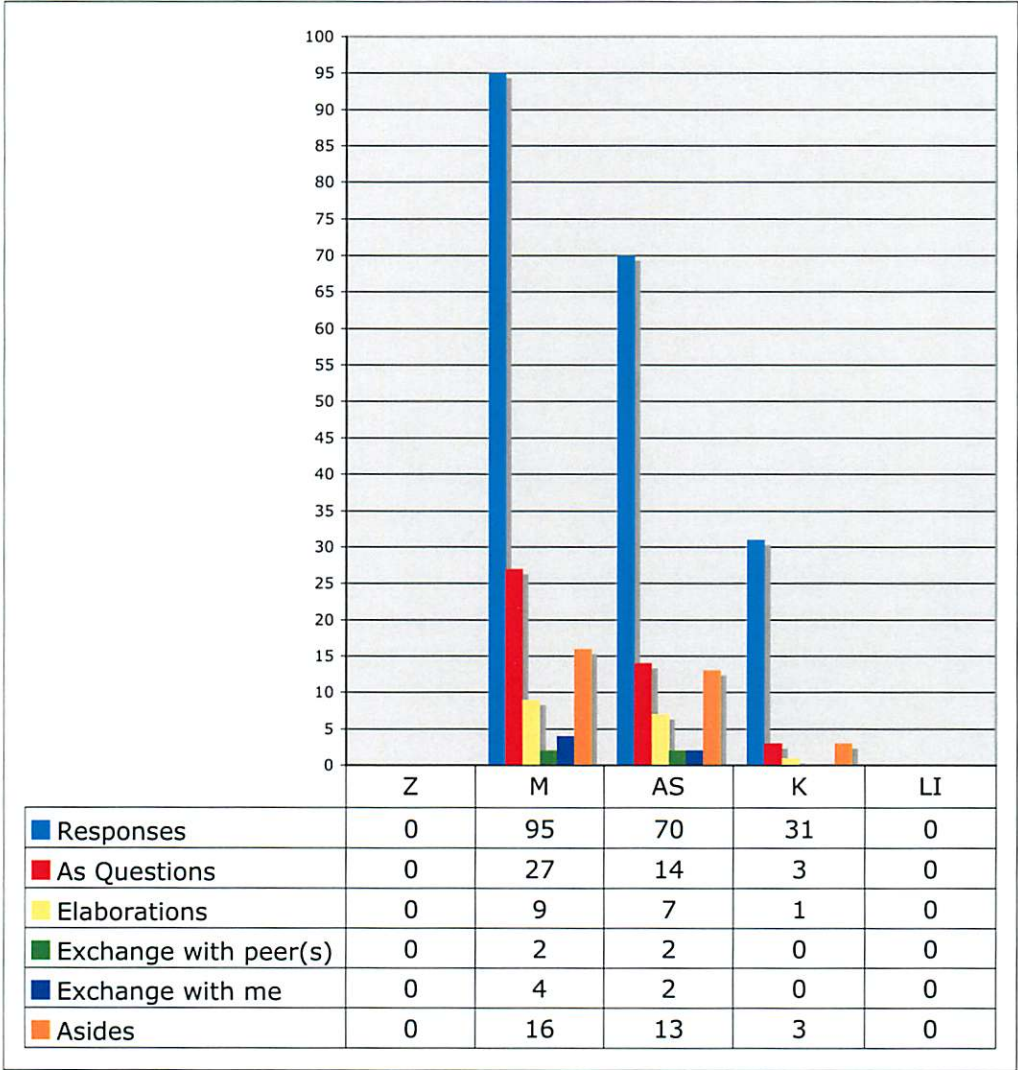
Day Four



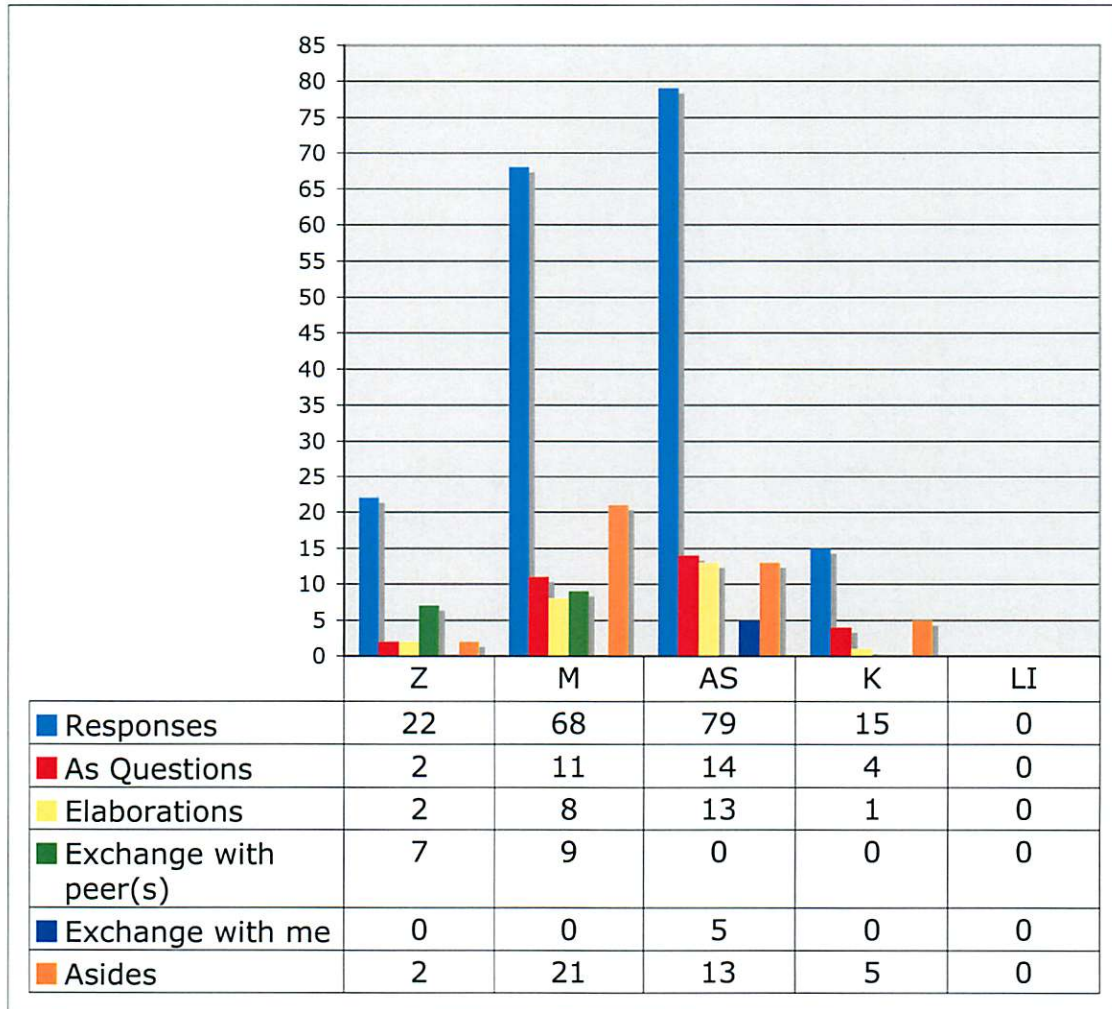
Day Five



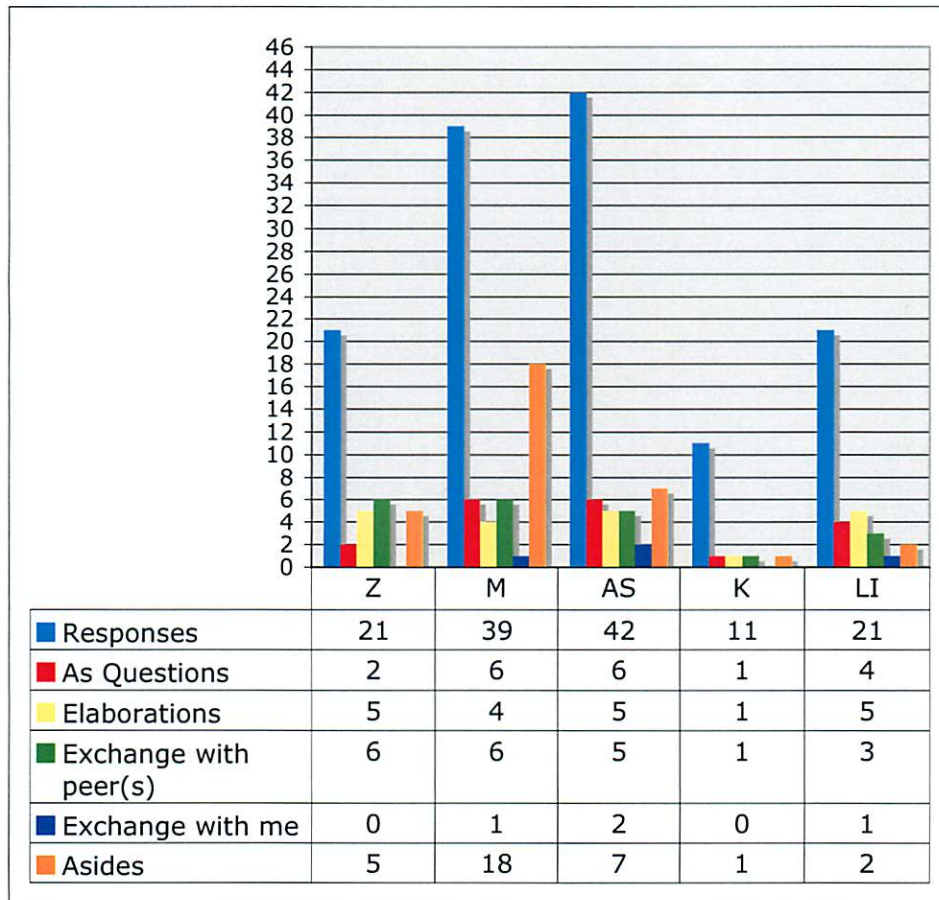
Day Six



Day Seven



Day Eight



Day 10 (insufficient response data from day 9-guest lecture)

ADDENDUM IV

ARTLAB Content Reading List

Reading 1

“Eight Years of Swimming Lessons” ---excerpt from *Dialogues With Duchamp* (Cabanne, 1971). The artist discusses his controversial work, and his decision to quit painting.

Reading 2

“\$5 or 10,000,000: Jackson Pollock or Some Unknown Artist”—excerpt from *Adbusters*. Article about a painting bought in a thrift store that is possibly an early Jackson Pollock.

Reading 3

Excerpts from Sculpture Community blog (web source), 06/16/06. “Is Contemporary art a fraud?” Anonymous artists discuss the worth of contemporary art.

Reading 4

“*The Truth*”—cartoon from *Eightball*, (Clowes, 1989). Strip about a struggling artist who randomly happens upon “the next thing”.

Reading 5

Excerpt, *Cabinet* magazine article, Fall, 2005. An artist places odds on philosophical musings using actual booking agencies.

Reading 6

Excerpt from *The Zombie Survival Handbook* (Brooks, 2004). The excerpt is from a “manual” that gives solid advice on how to prepare for a zombie attack.

Reading 7

Cabinet magazine-selected pages from an interview with Italian soccer goalie, Buffon. Buffon speaks philosophically about the notion of gaming as a creative act.

Reading 8 (not used)

Excerpts from *Wisconsin Death Trip* (Lesy, 1975)

A compilation of collaged found archive photos combined with tragic news reports from Wisconsin in the early 1900’s (not used).

Reading 9

Excerpt from Oscar Wilde's essay *The Critic as Artist*

Reading 10 (not used)

1970's Encyclopedia entry in a science series that explains the science of dowsing.

Reading 11 (not used)

Excerpt from Dave Hickey essay in *Air Guitar: Lessons in Art and Democracy* (Hickey, 1993).

The videos shown in class:

How Things Go

Break Up the Dance, Roman Polanski

"The Holy Moment" Chapter from *Waking Life* (Linklater, 2001).

Excerpts from *Pancake Mountain*, a children's dance show on cable access put on by Washington, D.C. punk musicians.

Audio:

Guitar Drag recording, Christian Marclay. Neon Records, 2006.

Company No Company, Robert Johnson and the Browns, 2001.

Clips from the National Public Radio project "*The Quiet American*"(web source)

In addition to discussing the readings, class time was spent discussing contemporary works or “recapping” topics from earlier conversations.

ADDENDUM V

Readings for Studio Projects

The selections and short synopses follows:

Before the Law, Franz Kafka The Great Short Works of Franz Kafka. Joachim Neugroschel, (trans.) Simon & Schuster, New York.

In this allegorical tale, a man spends his life desperately seeking admittance to “The Law”, which is kept from him by a gatekeeper and the locked door he stands before.

Secret Observations on the Goat Girl, Joyce Carol Oates.

In this surreal narrative, a young girl wonders about the life of a strange creature that lives in her town.

In the Reign of Harad IV, Stephen Millhauser 2006-04-10, The New Yorker.

In this Jorge Borges-esque tale, an ambitious miniaturist increases the level of his craft until he finds himself working primarily within the realm of the unseen.

Mark Strand, *The King* (Man and Camel) originally published in the New Yorker.

Strand’s enigmatic poem describes a diminutive king who has lost interest in ruling his kingdom.

ADDENDUM VI

Daily Notes Sample

Add-on:

Topic: Difference between good and poor dialogue (Friday was really good)

Daily

Topic: Why is art shocking? (art I can't show, responsibility, minors and explicit material)

As a form is often controversial

Artist's reasons

Show Duchamp, Zbigniew Libera, etc.

Discuss: Dan Clowes reading

Relate to topic: Music is a form that is continually shocking/growth of forms.

Hour one:

Questions from day 5

Rock, part one: Similarities between popular music culture/art culture.

Visual culture, popular culture, and art culture

Sonic youth album covers, artists who use rock culture, rock culture using art.

Gerhard Richter, Mike Kelly, Raymond Pettibon, Warhol, other artists

whose art graced album covers

Topics: relevance of popular culture, fandom

Banks Violette installation/ heavy metal culture/ teen crime

pancake mountain DVD

Next session:

add-ons

successful?

“LE”-gone?

Winchester house, create “shocking” folder

hour two

studio

homework: “E” (and “F”?) Betsense and Zombie Survival Handbook.

field projects///

ADDENDUM VIII

Further Notes from Steven Thompson's Class

In one instance, a conversation connected two seemingly unlike themes and artists:

(During a discussion about a previous reading, an essay on film making and the role of the artist, by Andrei Tarkovsky, and an autobiographical essay by artist Paul McCarthy)

The class discussed the use of horror to describe the human condition in general, and the artist's condition in particular. A recurring theme was that of 'sacred vs. profane'. Students discussed a connection between McCarthy's horrific imagery and the imagery in Tarkovsky's film Andrei Rubilev. At one point Thompson pointed out both artist's "absolute involvement" in the pursuit of beauty and abject qualities. He suggested that McCarthy, despite his fixation on scatological and sexual themes, is in reality pursuing the higher ideals set out by Tarkovsky in his essay.



The University of Georgia

Office of The Vice President for Research
DHHS Assurance ID No. : FWA00003901

Institutional Review Board
Human Subjects Office
612 Boyd GSRC
Athens, Georgia 30602-7411
(706) 542-3199
Fax: (706) 542-5638
www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso

APPROVAL FORM

Date Proposal Received: 2006-04-18

Project Number: 2006-10731-0

Name	Title	Dept/Phone	Address	Email
Mr. Anthony Wislar	PI	Art Lamar Dodd	180 Ambler Road Athens, GA 30607 706-552-1261	pupil33@uga.edu
Dr. Richard Siegesmund	CO	Art Education Lamar Dodd +4102 (706) 542-1647		rsieg@uga.edu

Title of Study: ArtLab Qualitative Case Study

45 CFR 46 Category: Expedite 6 7

Change(s) Required for Approval and Date Completed:
None;

Parameters:
None;

Approved : 2006-04-27 Begin date : 2006-04-27 Expiration date : 2007-04-26

NOTE: Any research conducted before the approval date or after the end data collection date shown above is not covered by IRB approval, and cannot be retroactively approved.

Number Assigned by Sponsored Programs:

Funding Agency:

Form 310 Provided: No

Your human subjects study has been approved.

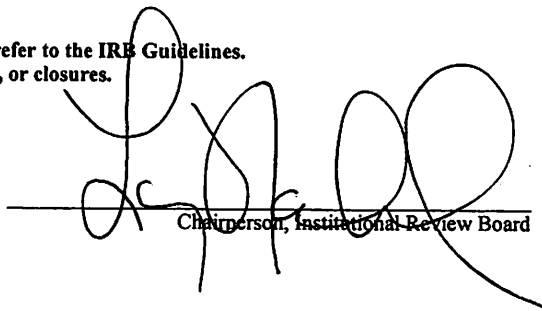
Please be aware that it is your responsibility to inform the IRB:

- ... of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to the subjects or others within 24 to 72 hours;
- ... of any significant changes or additions to your study and obtain approval of them before they are put into effect;
- ... that you need to extend the approval period beyond the expiration date shown above;
- ... that you have completed your data collection as approved, within the approval period shown above, so that your file may be closed.

For additional information regarding your responsibilities as an investigator refer to the IRB Guidelines.

Use the attached Researcher Request Form for requesting renewals, changes, or closures.

Keep this original approval form for your records.



Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

Art Lab Punch List

You have roughly seven days to develop ideas for a continuing project using paper as material. You are encouraged to stretch your ideas and concepts to a ridiculous degree. When your original idea is exhausted, it's time to develop a new project inspired by what worked or is interesting about the previous one. You could end up making several pieces.

Each participant will use as a starting point their choice from a selection of short stories.

This is to exercise some degree of "control" over the project. Some people work better using restraints and parameters, and others feel challenged by them.

Your other project will be done on your own time. It is a photo assignment. You are encouraged to create a photo-documentation of something that interests you locally. I very much encourage you to explore something/place/person unfamiliar. Please do not "explore" or record anything illegal!

Additionally, I'm going to ask you to bring at least one question or topic you want to discuss every day. Write it down or bring in a photo, if you want.

This is a discussion class, so your input is very much welcome. If you are not comfortable talking in front of a group, take it slow. You can also record your thoughts in the notebooks provided.

Here are some guidelines for dialogue in its most basic form

1. We talk about what's really important to us.
2. We really listen to each other. We see how thoroughly we can understand each other's views and experience.
3. We say what's true for us without making each other wrong.
4. We see what we can learn together by exploring things together.
5. We avoid monopolizing the conversation. We make sure everyone has a chance to speak.

1. *Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.* Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.
2. *In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.* In debate, winning is the goal.
3. *In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand, find meaning, and find agreement.* In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.
4. *Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes a participant's point of view.* Debate affirms a participant's own point of view.
5. *Dialogue reveals assumptions for reevaluation.* Debate defends assumptions as truth.
6. *Dialogue causes introspection on one's own position.* Debate causes critique of the other position.
7. *Dialogue opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.* Debate defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.
8. *Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude: an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.* Debate creates a closed-minded attitude, a

determination to be right.

9. *In dialogue, one submits one's best thinking, knowing that other people's reflections will help improve it rather than destroy it.* In debate, one submits one's best thinking and defends it against challenge to show that it is right.
10. *Dialogue calls for temporarily suspending one's beliefs.* Debate calls for investing wholeheartedly in one's beliefs.
11. *In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.* In debate, one searches for glaring differences.
12. *In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.* In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other positions.
13. *Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person and seeks to not alienate or offend.* Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.
14. *Dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together they can put them into a workable solution.* Debate assumes that there is a right answer and that someone has it.

Dialogue remains open-ended. Debate implies a conclusion.

From The Co-Intelligence Institute

<http://www.co-intelligence.org/P-dialogue.html>

if you were the most intelligent man of the that is intelligence?

was going to ask you! The word "intelligent" can invent. There is a logical or Cartesian link Breton meant to say something else. From a realist point of view, a freer form of the word was in some way the penetration of what is incomprehensible or difficult to understand. It was an explosion in the meaning of certain words. More than their meaning in the dictionary. It was the same order—we share a community of ideas. I understand his idea of intelligence: it is inflated if you wish. . . .

and you yourself have enlarged, inflated, and defined it, according to your own "intelligence." It is a way from the word "creation." In the dictionary word—well, it's very nice but, fundamentally, it is the creative function of the artist. He's a man who does certain things, but the businessman doesn't understand? On the other hand, the word "intelligence" if it comes from Sanskrit, as I've heard, means that everyone makes something, and those who are in a frame, they're called artists. Formerly, the word was a term I prefer. We're all craftsmen, in the sense of the word. When Rubens, or someone else, was in a guild for so many grams, and they were paid if he could have fifty or sixty grams,

and that who appear in the old contracts. The artist when the painter became an individual, and then in contemporary society, where they don't make things for people; it's the people who are in a frame among his production. The artist's subject is subject to concessions than before, under

you are one of the most intelligent men and I quote, "for many, the most irri-

ngled, not following the style of the time but this as an opposition to what they're doing, one which in reality doesn't exist at all.

FROM "DIALOGUES WITH MARCEL DUCHAMP" PIERRE CABANNE, DA CAPO PRESS, 1971

That rivalry existed only for Breton and the Surrealists, because they figured that one could do something other than what was being done at that point.

CABANNE: Do you think you've disturbed a lot of people?

DUCHAMP: No, not about this, because I've had anything but a public life. What little public life I did have was in Breton's group, and with others who were interested in my work a bit. In the true sense of the word, I've never had a public life, since I never exhibited the "Glass." It stayed in storage all the time.

CABANNE: So it's your moral position, more than your work, which was irritating?

DUCHAMP: There again, I had no position. I've been a little like Gertrude Stein. To a certain group, she was considered an interesting writer, with very original things. . . .

CABANNE: I admit I never would have thought of comparing you with Gertrude Stein. . . .

DUCHAMP: It's a form of comparison between people of that period. By that, I mean that there are people in every period who aren't "in." No one's bothered by it. Whether I had been in or not, it would have been all the same. It's only now, forty years later, that we discover things had happened forty years before that might have bothered some people—but they couldn't have cared less then!

CABANNE: Before going into details, we could tackle the key event in your life, that is, the fact that, after about twenty-five years of painting, you abruptly abandoned it. I'd like you to explain this rupture.

DUCHAMP: It came from several things. First, rubbing elbows with artists, the fact that one lives with artists, that one talks with artists, displeased me a lot. There was an incident, in 1912, which "gave me a turn," so to speak; when I brought the "Nude Descending a Staircase" to the Indépendants, and they asked me to withdraw it before the opening. In the most advanced group of the period, certain people had extraordinary qualms, a sort of fear! People like Gleizes, who were, nevertheless, extremely intelligent, found that this "Nude" wasn't in the line that they had predicted. Cubism had lasted two or three years, and they already had an absolutely clear, dogmatic line on it, foreseeing everything that might happen. I found that naïvely foolish. So, that cooled me off so much that, as a reaction against such behavior coming from artists whom I had believed to be free, I got a job. I became a librarian at the Sainte-Geneviève Library in Paris.

I made this gesture to rid myself of a certain milieu, a certain attitude, to have a clean conscience, but also to make a living. I was twenty-five.

Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2 is a 1912 painting by Marcel Duchamp.

In the painting, Duchamp depicted motion by successive superimposed images, similar to motion pictures. The painting shows elements of both the Cubist and Futurist styles. Duchamp also recognized the influence of the stop-motion photography of Eadweard Muybridge, specifically his *Nude Descending Stairs* (1887).

Duchamp first submitted the work to appear in a Cubist show at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris, but jurist Albert Gleizes asked Duchamp's brothers, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, to have him voluntarily withdraw the painting, or paint over the title that he had painted on the work and rename it something else.

Of the incident he recalled,

I said nothing to my brothers. But I went immediately to the show and took my painting home in a taxi. It was really a turning point in my life, I can assure you. I saw that I would not be very much interested in groups after that.

Much of the scandal about modern art at the 1913 Armory Show in New York was focused on the piece.

He submitted the painting to the 1913 Armory Show in New York City where Americans, accustomed to realistic art, were scandalized. An art critic for the *New York Times* wrote that the work resembled *an explosion in a shingle factory*, and cartoonists satirized the piece. It spawned dozens of parodies in the years that followed.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art displays the painting. [1]
(http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/modern_contemporary/1950-134-59.shtml)

Reference

- Tompkins, Calvin (1996). *Duchamp: A Biography*. U.S.: Henry Holt and Company, Inc. ISBN 0-8050-5789-7.

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nude_Descending_a_Staircase%2C_No._2"

Categories: Modern paintings | Marcel Duchamp | 1912 paintings



Marcel Duchamp. *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912). Oil on canvas. 57 7/8" x 35 1/8". Philadelphia Museum of Art.

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A



Marcel Duchamp
Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2



Gallery I French Paintings and Sculpture

The audience was encouraged by the layout of the Armory to move from Gallery A to the east or west side, where many of the American paintings and sculpture were shown. However, by the second week of the show, many visitors reportedly rushed to the "Chamber of Horrors," Gallery I, in the far lefthand side of the Armory. One reviewer recommended this approach to the exhibition: "The visitor might just as well go straight to gallery I . . . where the Cubists reign supreme. If he has been a consistent follower of New York exhibitions the shock will be slight, and if he has been to Paris the sight will be familiar. . . He is now prepared really to see the exhibition, and as he goes from room to room he will find that while weird examples are decidedly in evidence they hold a minor position in the exhibition" ("Modern Art" 1). Innocently titled French Paintings and Sculpture in the catalog, Gallery I quickly became known as The Cubist Room, and the works

shown there solidified the movement in the minds of Americans for many years.

In large exhibitions like the Armory Show, the controversy usually revolved around one room; at the Armory the hub was Gallery I. This narrowed focus meant many artists were forgotten in the rush to identify the most memorable works from the show. The 1905 Salon d'Automne, where entries numbered over 2,000, was the exhibition where Louis Vauxcelles exclaimed, "Donatello among the wild beasts!" upon entering Room VII and seeing Italianate sculptures surrounded by the paintings of Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck, Marquet, Manguin, and Camoin (Altshuler 10). Fauve artists outside Room VII were generally overlooked at the 1905 exhibition. Similarly, cubism came into common parlance during the 1911 Salon des Independants exhibition where Metzinger, Gleizes, Le Fauconnier, Leger, and Delaunay, and Laurencin showed their work in Room 41 (Altshuler 28). Although Picasso and Braque are now credited as the originators of cubism, the artists in Room 41 were often considered the founders of this movement.

Crowds were reportedly so large in Gallery I that one could barely get a glimpse at the "success by scandal," Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (above). By the third week, the painting had gained such notoriety that it was bought sight unseen by Frederic Torrey, an art dealer from California. Duchamp's painting was punned to death—a work entitled "Food Descending a Staircase" was shown at an exhibition parodying the most outrageous works at the Armory, running concurrently with the show at The Lighthouse School for the Blind (Brown, *Story* 141). In *American Art News*, there were prizes offered to anyone who could find the nude (Brown, *Story* 136).



\$5 OR \$10,000,000

Title and date unknown

JACKSON POLLOCK OR SOME UNKNOWN ARTIST

Depending on who you talk to, this painting could be worth as much ten million dollars. Or, it could go for around five bucks, as did a similar work purchased a few years back at a California thrift store. But that painting, it turned out, was a genuine Jackson Pollock, and once identified by experts, it's safe to say the value shifted slightly. Those same experts now are bitterly divided over the authenticity of the work

above – egos, reputations and millions of dollars (needless to say) are on the line. Nowhere in the dispute, it seems, has the quality of the work itself been discussed. Of course these days a painting's quality is almost exclusively determined by its market value. Only when the wannabe-Pollock has been deemed the genuine article, and the no-doubt frenzied bidding has ensued, will the work itself be worthy of discussion.

FROM ADBUSTERS # 61, 113, #5
SEPT/OCT 2005

View Single Post

Thread: Is contemporary art a fraud?

10-24-2005, 11:59 AM

17



oddist
ISC Member



Join Date: Nov 2004
Location: New England
Posts: 490

Re: Is contemporary art a fraud?

One of the things that led me to post this title was an article I read about Rachel Whitereads latest installation at the Tate. As I was reading the [article](#) I found myself asking "maybe art is an experience? ...so I searched on "art as experience."

What I came up with was a book by that name and also a short [review](#) of the book with some intriguing quotes.

The quote that struck me from this review was:

"For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent....Without an act of recreation the object is not perceived as a work of art." (p. 54)

(I'm in the process of reading the book just to add to my own background on art and aesthetics.)

Anyway, there are a myriad of materials and techniques used today in the production of sculpture. There are realists, minimalists, audio-visualists, constructionists, kineticists, and on and on the list goes...growing with every creative effort on the part of today's *creative* artists....Each style has its place, its proponents and detractors.

I went to an "Iron Pour" at the Sculpture Fest at the Vermont Carving Studio and in the early dark of evening saw nothing produced but a flaming chute of molten iron cascading some 30 feet into a water filled quarry...the bright yellow light of the stream of iron lite up the faces of the granite and the hissing of the steaming water as the hot iron hit echoed off the long abandon walls. Was it art? It took a while, but I found the experience to have been worth the two hour drive and yes, it was ART. As momentary as it was...it is forever in my memeoery.

I believe much museum art is for the attraction and entertainment of the visitors. If an installation, it's not made to last. It just draws the public. There are calendars, and mugs, and catalogs, etc. sold to commemorate such and event. But an installation says something about our time and the artists that endeavour to pursue this means of expression are as valid as any. They truly speak to *our* time. For all we know, most of the pieces that are not considered by many to be *real* sculpture will end up in a museum basement storage collecting dust...becoming something for future Art Historians to contemplate.

The Koons vac's...I don't take to them either...but they are part of our time and the museum that displays them is recording this. They do say something. What? I guess it's all up to the beholder. It doesn't make it *good* art. It make it part of *today's* art.

Who really knows what will be next. Look at all the materials and technology now being used to create art. Even [biology](#).

After all, I know I have produced some things I don't consider to be art. And I've never shown them...for that reason...But, it doesn't mean they are not.

I for one am going to keep an open mind...Who knows what I might learn.

oddist

"Important artists are innovators whose work changes the practices of their successors; important works of art are those that embody these innovations."

Galenson, David W. *Old Masters and young geniuses*, Princeton University Press, 2006



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View Single Post

Thread: Is contemporary art a fraud?

10-22-2005, 11:22 AM

4

GaryR52 ●

Level 10 user

Join Date: Jun 2005
Location: Oklahoma
Posts: 625**Re: Is contemporary art a fraud?**

As a modernist, I've never had any problem with modern art, of course. However, like Merlion, I do have my own "cut-off" point and that falls, oddly enough, at about the point that the Duchampian strain begins to really gain acceptance, i.e., the period of conceptual and performance art we've been seeing since the seventies.

I had no problem with the Primary Structuralist, or Minimalist art of the sixties and seventies, as it contains some of the same qualities of modern architecture and thus, appeals to my love of that.

Of course, anything prior to the sixties, back to the French Impressionists is all within my love of modernism, with few exceptions (specifically, again, Duchamp's "ready mades" and the notion that anything can be art). So, formally speaking, the entire modernist period is within the bounds of my tastes, but, it's tempered by my belief that art is more dependent upon process and the artist's hand than it is a conceptual assemblage of objects the artist himself didn't make. Bruce Nauman I can relate to; Jeff Koons, not so much.

The point at which art ceases to be a creative process (and by that, I mean the artist has actually been engaged in object making) and becomes, instead, all about the *idea* and less about object making, is the point I part company with it. If you carved the vacuum cleaner from a block of plaster, fine. If it's a real, unaltered Hoover that you've merely hung on a gallery wall and called your own, forget it. That, for me, is the point at which art becomes a fraud.

Gary



Close this window

C

View Single Post

Thread: Is contemporary art a fraud?

10-22-2005, 11:05 PM

#7



JAZ
Moderator

Join Date: Jan 2004
Posts: 1,142

Re: No art is fraudulent... is it?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **fused**

IF... you pay someone else to carve a vacuum cleaner out of a block of plaster is it art?

Yesterday I went to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston with some friends. Out front on the lawn, (ironically flanking the sculpture of the Native American on his horse praying to the Great Spirit) were two gigantic "sculptures" from the Lane collection. They are two America's Cup yachts. They are definitely gorgeous boats, beautifully designed. Even the extensive guy wire system that supports them is beautifully designed. We discussed whether they were art. I suggested that if we argued about them, they would be.

JAZ

creation as a profession...



Close this window

C

View Single Post

Thread: Is contemporary art a fraud?

10-22-2005, 12:23 PM

6

fused
Level 10 user

Join Date: Apr 2004
Location: Texas
Posts: 353

Re: No art is fraudulent... is it?

*...art is more dependent upon process and the artist's hand
than it is a conceptual assemblage of
objects the artist himself didn't make.*

The artist's hand is an interesting criteria. Richard Serra has sculptures all over the world --that can be measured in tonnage-- who's construction elluded his hands. I suppose these impressive works might be relative to architecture (as well) in comparison of their process of coming into being. The realm of modern/contemporary sculpture includes many designers of works --which include architects-- who develop concepts and pay others with particular skills to execute the actual work.

IF... you pay someone else to carve a vacuum cleaner out of a block of plaster is it art?



Close this window

©

THE TRUTH

By Daniel Clowes

Even as a young child I had artistic inclinations. I sought, how ever crudely, to express my perception of the truth and thereby to heed the call of a personal mandate...



In adolescence I worked diligently to improve my skills. I thought that a perfected drawing technique would enable me to discern the truth that nature kept hidden from others...



During my years in school I began to grow impatient with representational drawing. I wanted to pursue more personal avenues...



I worked for many years, alone in a shabby hovel, searching within myself for the answer, content that mine was a noble cause...



Eventually I began to feel isolated. I wanted others to interact with my work... Unfortunately, it was considered too bold, too harsh for public consumption...



I went into a period of deep contemplation... A lack of critical success had eroded my confidence. My high-minded inclinations were being held hostage by a desire for acceptance... Also I was starving.



I began to experiment blindly and at random hoping to come up with something that would catch on with the public and thereby complete the "artistic cycle..."



One morning I did some spray-paint drawings of cartoon characters on unfolded paper napkins...

Through sheer good fortune I had "come along at the right time." I was called a "post-modern genius," given my own one-man show and reviewed favorably in all the magazines.



I am now popular among my peers in the art world and at last I know the truth.

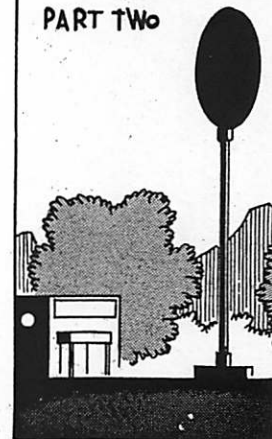


The truth is that people are MORONG.

END.



PART TWO



Eightball #2, February, 1989. Eightball is published 1 of this magazine may be reproduced without written of any living or dead persons is intended (except for s for publication in whole or in part, and may therefore

FROM
JAMES PEEL



BETSENSE LTD

Monday 4th March 2002

Dear Mr. Peel,

In response to your letter of 28th Feb, I am pleased to inform you that our company would have no problem in taking the following bets for you and the odds we would offer are as follows:

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. That we shall live happily ever after. | 10 : 1 against |
| 2. That we shall be reunited when we die. | 20 : 1 against |
| 3. That when I fall in love it will be forever. | 17 : 1 against |
| 4. That I will find true love. | 7 : 2 for |
| 5 : That love outlasts time. | 18.79683 : 6 against |

I trust that these odds are satisfactory, and I look forward to taking your money.

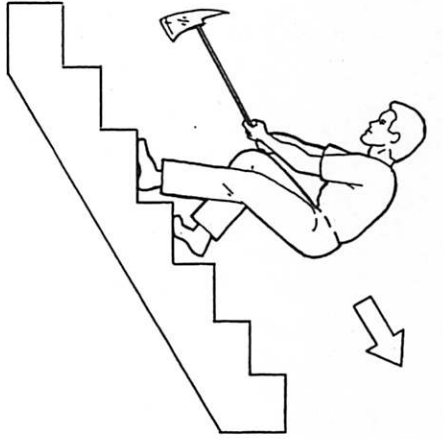
Yours Sincerely

Jo Kerr

Jo-Ann Kerr
Managing Director
(Betsense Ltd)

FROM CABINET # 19 FALL 2005

(E)



1. PREPARATION PART I: THE HOME

Before the dead rise, before the chaos and carnage begin, certain homeowners will find that they are safer than their neighbors. Although no house was ever constructed for the purpose of zombie defense, several designs have proved remarkably secure. If your house itself is not structurally ready for a zombie attack, various measures can be employed to fortify it.

A. Exceptions

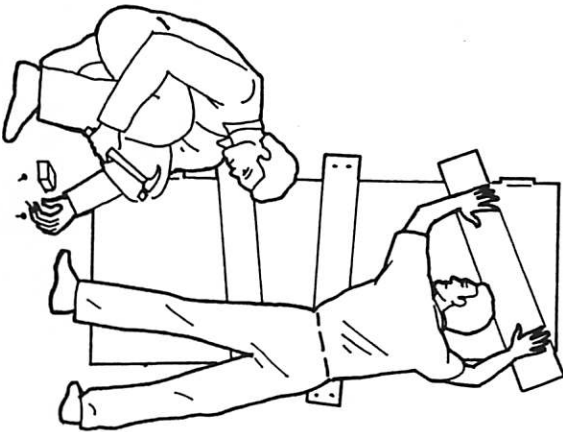
Stilted homes, as seen on beaches and along rivers and other high watermark areas, were built mainly to avoid being overrun by floods. Their height already makes conventional attacks impossible. Doors and windows could even remain open and unboarded. The only entrance and one or two outside staircases could either be barricaded or destroyed once the alarm is sounded. Secure on this raised platform, survival time would be determined only by the amount of provisions a homeowner had stockpiled.

There is another highly protective dwelling that was built to combat a force just as prevalent, and just as deadly, as an undead army:

Tornado-proof "safe houses," now being constructed in the American heartland, are designed to resist mild to moderate twisters. Their layout consists of concrete walls, steel-reinforced doors, and steel shutters neatly concealed behind everyday curtains. On their own, these domiciles could withstand both a Class 1 and Class 2 outbreak.

B. Modifications to Houses

Securing a house against the undead is similar to securing it from the living. One difference is the common burglar alarm. Many of us sleep securely at night only because our alarms are "armed" and working. But what do these devices really do, other than send a signal to a private security or police force? What if these forces don't come? What if they are occupied with other battles? What if they are ordered to protect areas deemed "more important"? What if they have ceased to exist, disappeared into the stomachs of ghouls? In any of these cases, direct means of defense are called for.



(4)



capture me; I can always fail. Later, the same instant is broadcast from different angles at different speeds: slow motion, still, backward and forward. Speech also supports the image; they talk about my career, my common mistakes and virtues, all the statistics around my movements, how many balls I stopped in my life, how many I've let through.

Why do you think football is so popular?

Football is about enchantment. For an hour and a half, the world stops because a ball is being chased and a different kind of time unfolds, capturing the concentration of the players and the audience and generating its own story. One player or another is praised or blamed, bets are placed. Afterwards, the world is normal again and the spell evaporates. The game's interest lies not in the plot but in the shifts, in the changes in the many micro-plots. I'm reminded of Fastrada's ring story. You know the story? The one where the Emperor Charlemagne falls in love with Fastrada. The barons are in his court, extremely worried because they see that Charlemagne is neglecting the affairs of state. When



the girl suddenly dies, the courtiers feel relieved—but not for long because Charlemagne's love does not die with her. The Emperor carries her body to his bedroom, where he refuses to part from it.

The Archbishop Turpin

suspects an enchantment and insists on examining the corpse. Hidden under the dead girl's tongue he finds a ring. As soon as the ring touches Turpin's hands, Charlemagne falls passionately in love with the archbishop and quickly has the girl buried. In order to escape the embarrassing situation, Turpin flings the ring into lake Constance. Charlemagne thereupon falls in love with the lake and never leaves its shores.

The real protagonist of the story is the magic ring, because it is the movement of the ring that determines the actions of the characters and establishes the relationships between them. Around the magic object

there is a kind of forcefield, which is the territory of the story itself. We might say that the magic object is a visible sign that describes the connection between people or events.

For me, the ball plays the role of this magic object in that for a short period, a group of people are pursuing it and millions of viewers are following its route.

Maybe it's stupid to put it this way, but it's like a moving compass. I remember when I was a child we did an experiment at school in which we built our own compass, affixing a cork with a magnetized needle. If you float it in a bowl of water and wait until it's still, the needle will work as a compass, pointing north. The problem is that the needle is hardly still and its accuracy is very fragile and sensitive to the smallest movement. I like the idea of this improvised and fragile object that nevertheless maintains a rule.

Many people talk about football as a circus, and I find it curious that your name—Buffon—means "clown" or "joker." What do you think about this strange coincidence?

I like to think that I am a buffoon, a clown, entrusted with the task of entertaining people, playing a very stupid role. I'm often blamed for playing dirty tricks, like if I suddenly start kicking the ball outside my area, forgetting my position at the goal. Being a clown is also a question of playing with the rules. If you play with the rules, you may become a joker or a criminal, but in a sense you change people's own rules of thinking. Many people don't like the way I play; they think I am overacting, screaming too much, trying to win the attention of the cameras, but I do that intentionally to maintain the link between sport and the notion that it is truly just a circus. Anyway, everyone knows that barking dogs don't bite.

There is a common notion that football players are stupid and ignorant, and that they merely know how to move their legs. What do you think about that?

For me, intelligence isn't about knowledge, but is rather an activity related to humor, pleasure, and curiosity. I take an aesthetic pleasure in an idea; I love its form and shape, rather than its tendency to harden into a series of irrefutable facts. Maybe I am talking about an invisible kind of intel-

ligence that doesn't need to be written. It relates more to a conversation between friends or with the things that cross my mind when I am traveling from one city to another. It's about being awake, outside of common ideas about the world;



an instant response, a joke, a trick, a flip of meaning that makes you laugh. There is a space opened behind my mind. Sometimes I think that interesting things are always behind senseless connections, they stay hidden there because people are too serious and they don't play with notions of truth.

It is a very common mistake that we think we're ignorant of something because we are unable to define it. You could say that we can move toward a definition of something only when we know nothing about it. Perhaps the human mind has a tendency to deny statements. Arguments convince nobody because they are presented as arguments. No one has ever won an argument and anyone who believes you can is living in a fantasy world. We look at them, we weigh them, we turn them over, and we decide against them. But when something is merely said or—better still—hinted at, and maybe that's a trick too, there is a kind of hospitality in our imagination and we are ready to accept it. I think that games are one way to open this space in people's imaginations.

What is the role of chance in the game?

I think in general, games are about a tension between chance and rules, that's what keeps the attention alive: the desire and the possibility of breaking the rules, of being lucky or of seeing something unexpected. Maybe in the case of football, this situation is more evident for the audience. Anyhow, every time I start playing I really don't know what will happen, especially because my position as a goalkeeper is very much about observing, waiting, and then reacting at the right moment. No matter how much I practice, I am

unable to control the whole situation and I really enjoy this uncertainty.

101

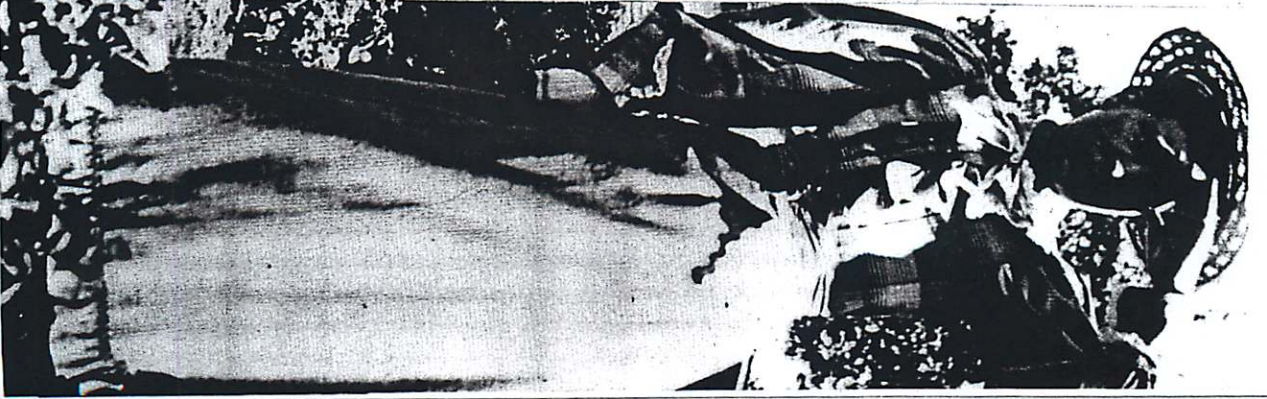
As an athlete, do you need to have strong discipline?

At the end of the day, when push comes to shove, I am a very lazy person. I like to think about everything at the same time but I have no patience to linger for too long on any single subject. I chose an activity where I need to make instant and fast decisions about complex situations. This was one of the main reasons for taking this shortcut, if we can call it that. As a goalie, my working hours are very short; I really need to put all my attention into what I'm doing.

Is it true about the goalkeeper's fear of the penalty kick?

I don't think I have committed *every* possible mistake—because mistakes are innumerable—but many of them, and I really enjoy failure and that people keep talking about the mistake for weeks. Maybe it's one of the few moments of the game when they can blame one person, and that's me.





⑤ WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP
Michael Less 1975



"Paul Sechler, only son of Charles Sechler, died at his home in Sechlerville, March 14, 1891, aged 15 years.

"He has gone, but he had not far to go—only through the gates into the city—then came the glad, happy meeting of mother and son. He started home long ago and has been waiting outside for weary months. . . . He left his suffering and weakness all this side the gate. . . .

"His father sat by him in the closing hours, yet heard not the flutter of angel wings as they came so gently and bore his dear one away. . . ." [3/19, County]

"Mrs. Elizabeth Beckman was arrested by Post Office Inspector Pulcifer, charged with sending obscene letters through the United States mails." [4/16, State]

"Last Friday, Mrs. Anna Nelson of the town of Irving was brought before Judge Perry, examined as to her sanity, and adjudged insane. . . . She was quite violent." [5/14, Town]

"Admitted June 20th, 1901. Resident of Jackson County. Age 34. American. Married. Seven children. Youngest, 2 years. Housewife. Poor. . . . Melancholia—fear of injury by the devil or some other person. Insomnia. . . . Filthy. Emaciated, extreme weakness—Tremor—very religious. . . ."

[Mendota State, 1896 Record Book (Female, G), p. 637, patient #8848]

"This morning Sheriff Williams received a letter from the insane asylum at Mendota stating that Johanes Norelius, whom Mr. Williams took there about 4 years ago, escaped. The unfortunate man was from the town of Cleveland." [5/14, Town]

"Admitted Feb. 22, 1888. Town of Garden Valley. Aged 41. Born in Wisconsin. Married. Farmer. There have been numerous attacks of insanity since '81. . . . These attacks are manifested by violent spells alternating with fits of melancholia. Easily excited at little things when he becomes violent and profane. His family is afraid of him although he has never attempted to injure anyone. . . . March 28th: Discharged today. Went home with his father. Recovered. . . . Readmitted August 15, 1894. Married. 3 children, youngest, 18 years. Farmer. Limited means. . . . Insanity now manifested by seclusion and a tendency to violence when opposed. Neglect of business affairs etc. . . . Has used tobacco to excess. . . ."

[Mendota State, 1887 Record Book (Male, F), p. 156, patient #4717]

The motto of the high school graduating class of 1891 was "Standing with reluctant feet/where the brook and river meet." The speeches given by the young men were entitled: "The Age of Progress," "Chivalry," and "The Massacre of St. Bartholomew." The speeches given by the young ladies were: "Hero Worship," "Russian Nihilism," "Uncrowned Kings," "Simon Says," "Lo, The Poor Indian," "Mind Culture," "Abraham Lincoln," "Dante," and "Conflict and Character." [6/18, Town]

"Fire broke out in the University gymnasium building at Madison. . . . it was totally destroyed. The fire was the work of incendiaries." [7/2, State]

"Dr. Joquish, a well-known citizen of Osseo, claims that his soul recently separated from [his] body and went up to the heavens where it met and talked with his old father. He professes to remember the circumstances well. The doctor is a man of strong mind and this story is an alarming one to some of his relatives who think he is somewhat insane." [7/2, State]



the finest materials. Anything will serve his purpose. And just as out of the sordid and sentimental amours of the silly wife of a small country doctor in the squalid village of Yonville-l'Abbaye, near Rouen, Gustave Flaubert was able to create a classic, and make a masterpiece of style, so, from subjects of little or of no importance, such as the pictures in this year's Royal Academy, or in any year's Royal Academy for that matter, Mr. Lewis Morris's poems, M. Ohnet's novels, or the plays of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, the true critic can, if it be his pleasure so to direct or waste his faculty of contemplation, produce work that will be flawless in beauty and instinct with intellectual subtlety. Why not? Dulness is always an irresistible temptation for brilliancy, and stupidity is the permanent Bestia Trionfans that calls wisdom from its cave. To an artist so creative as the critic, what does subject-matter signify? No more and no less than it does to the novelist and the painter. Like them, he can find his motives everywhere. Treatment is the test. There is nothing that has not in it suggestion or challenge.

ERNEST. But is Criticism really a creative art?

GILBERT. Why should it not be? It works with materials, and puts them into a form that is at once new and delightful. What more can one say of poetry? Indeed, I would call criticism a creation within a creation. For just as the great artists, from Homer and AEschylus, down to Shakespeare and Keats, did not go directly to life for their subject-matter, but sought for it in myth, and legend, and ancient tale, so the critic deals with materials that others have, as it were, purified for him, and to which imaginative form and colour have been already added. Nay, more, I would say that the highest Criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation, as it has least reference to any standard external to itself, and is, in fact, its own reason for existing, and, as the Greeks would put it, in itself, and to itself, an end. Certainly, it is never trammelled by any shackles of verisimilitude. No ignoble considerations of probability, that cowardly concession to the tedious repetitions of domestic or public life, affect it ever. One may appeal from fiction unto fact. But from the soul there is no appeal.

ERNEST. From the soul?

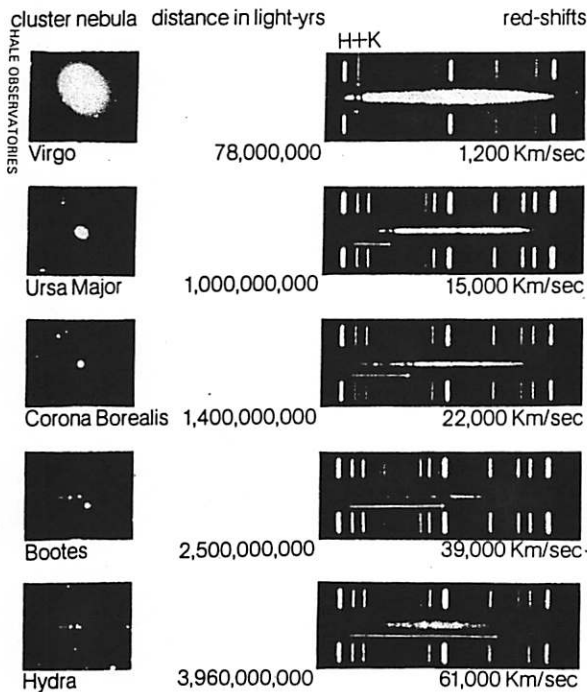
GILBERT. Yes, from the soul. That is what the highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilised form of autobiography, as it deals not with the events, but with the thoughts of one's life; not with life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative

used to calculate stellar velocities and, in the case of orbital bodies such as binary stars, planets and planetary moons, their orbits and distances.

In the present century it was realized that the shift of what appear to be the most distant objects is towards the red end of the spectrum, this lengthening of the apparent wavelength signifying motion away from the solar system. By 1940 the *red shift* was accepted as strongly indicative of an expanding Universe, with the most distant visible objects receding at the highest speeds.

In the field of RADAR, Doppler effects have become enormously important. By 1950 military radars were beginning to incorporate MTI (moving target indication) by adding circuits which instantly detect reflected signals subject to a Doppler shift while ignoring reflections from fixed targets. Thus the radar could at once spot an aircraft approaching low down in front of a distant hillside. Today Doppler radars are so sensitive they can be used as BURGLAR ALARMS. A miniature aerial can 'illuminate' a courtyard or other space and signal the alarm if an intruder were to creep in at the slowest practical rate of human motion. Other Doppler radars are carried by aircraft as navigation aids, to measure relative motion between aircraft and ground (see AVIONICS) with special corrections being applied for wave motion when flying over the ocean. This principle is also used in radar speed checks on cars.

Evidence for an expanding universe. On the left are galaxies—huge star systems—each progressively smaller and fainter. On the right are their spectra, the long streaks between pairs of reference spectra produced at the telescope. The more distant the galaxy, the more the distinctive 'H' and 'K' lines, due to ionized calcium, are shifted to the red end as indicated by the arrow. The actual distances to the galaxies must be found separately, for example by detecting stars of known brightness in them.



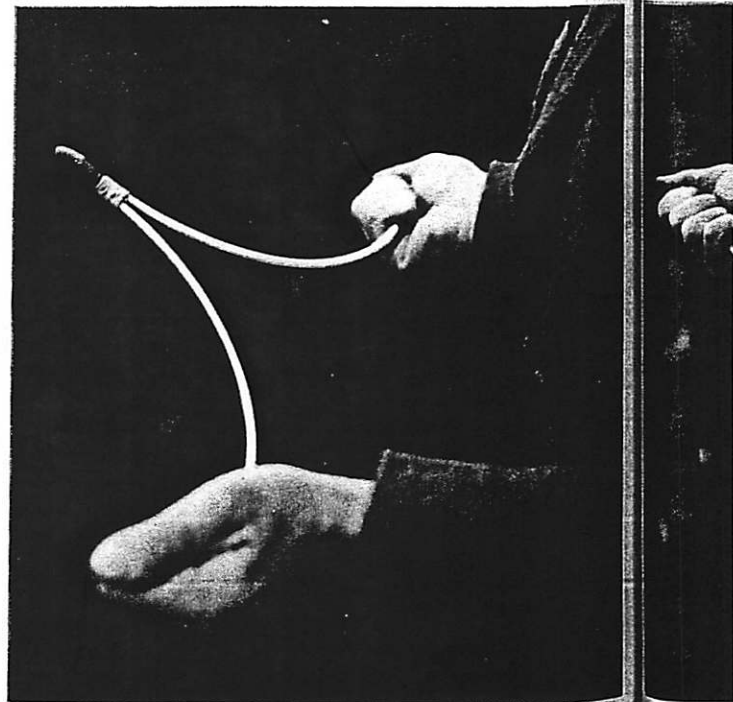
DOWSING

Dowsing, also known popularly as water divining, is a method of finding things, generally underground, by the use of a natural sensitivity in man which is neither properly understood nor explicable in conventional scientific terms. The sensitivity is present in most people to a greater or lesser degree, but is not known to be connected with any physical part of the brain or sensory apparatus. Nevertheless, it incontestably exists; dowsing is a practical method of finding water and, though this is less well known universally, certain other things as well.

Dowsing has been practised for at least 2000 years. It is thought that the ability has always been present in man, but has atrophied through the years as the need for it became less with the growth of civilization. In recent centuries it has been discouraged by religious authorities.

Applications The applications of dowsing today are varied and include the location of water, minerals, oil, archaeological sites, and cables, pipes or drains. Furthermore it is also possible to estimate the depth of the object below the surface. Other applications of dowsing include finding missing people or lost articles, the diagnosis and treatment of illness and soil analysis. All aspects of dowsing, however, are serious practical fields of dowsing and are not for the inexperienced. To be proficient and reliable the dowser must know the background of the field in which he is working and be experienced, as a dowser, in that field.

Tools and methods Because dowsing is a highly individualistic art, the tools and methods used vary a great deal. Often a dowser will know the answer through his sensitivity



These photographs show one dowser's code of rod movement. There are, however, many others. Here the V rod is held in a position of tension, in the search position at the start of a walk.

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but it is better conveyed to him by some vital indication, so tools are used. These are moved by the dowser's muscles, even if subconsciously, the movement corresponding to the individual's own adopted code of signals.

Three main groups of tools are used: angle rods, pendulums and hands. The actual size and weight of the angle rod or pendulum is left to the preference of the dowser. Angle rods are often pieces of fence wire bent at right angles. The hand-held part is usually about 8 inch (20 cm) and the other part about 18 inch (46 cm). Rods are held loosely in the hand with the long arm pointing forward. Pendulums may be any size and made of any material. Small ones are often used indoors by skilled operators in conjunction with maps, while the larger ones are sometimes preferred for outdoor work. Some dowsers may use their hands alone for outdoor work.

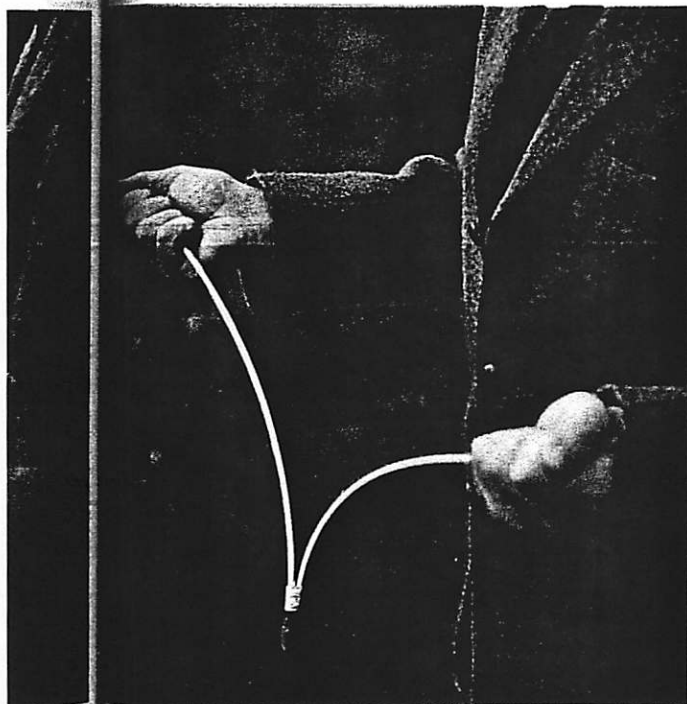
The modern dowser often works in three stages: firstly at home using a map or plan, secondly at the location itself to confirm or if necessary correct the findings made at home, and lastly by carrying out a test dig, or whatever is the appropriate proof action.

Many people who have the sensitivity to be good dowsers do not know that they possess it, and would not believe it if told. This attitude in itself prevents successful use of the technique, and so, on the other hand, do preconceived ideas and wishful thinking. The sensitivity must be carefully developed (rather than gained where it never existed before) by practice on simple tasks with demonstrable results, keeping questions in the mind regarding what is sought absolutely clear and appropriate.



PHOTOS: JULIETTE MUSKETT

Angle rods are frequently used by dowsers. In the search position they are held loosely in the hand with the long arm pointing forward (top). On approaching the object, the muscles move the rods inward until they are in the 'found' position (bottom).



As the dowser walks over the area undergoing investigation, on approaching the object sought, his arm muscles start moving the rod, until over the object it is in the 'found' position.



(G)

Helpful terms for ARTLAB:

Aesthetics- This word has several meanings! It refers to the study of beauty. It also has to do with the philosophy of art. To study aesthetics is to explore meaning, purpose, and any other qualities of art.

Criticism- Another word with more than one meaning. It is the study and evaluation of art. For us, criticism is talking about art.

Contemporary art- This term really means art that is being made currently. It also usually implies art that is non-traditional in concept or execution.

Postmodernism- the meaning of things relies on context- who experiences it, where and when it is experienced. There is no single answer or truth, but many differing understandings.

AIR GUITAR

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Colleagues of mine will tell you that people despise critics because they fear our power. But I know better. People despise critics because people despise weakness, and criticism is the weakest thing you can do in writing. It is the written equivalent of air guitar—flurries of silent, sympathetic gestures with nothing at their heart but the memory of the music. It produces no knowledge, states no facts, and never stands alone. It neither saves the things we love (as we would wish them saved) nor ruins the things we hate. *Edinburgh Review* could not destroy John Keats, nor Diderot Boucher, nor Ruskin Whistler; and I like that about it. It's a loser's game, and everybody knows it. Even ordinary citizens, when they discover you're a critic, respond as they would to a mortuary cosmetician—vaguely repelled by what you do yet infinitely curious as to how you came to be doing it. So, when asked, I always confess that I am an art critic today because, as a very young person, I set out to become a writer—and did so with a profoundly defective idea of what writing does and what it entails.

Specifically, I embarked upon a career in writing blithely undismayed by the fact that, as a writer, I was primarily interested in that which writing obliterates: in the living atmosphere of all that is shown, seen, touched, felt, smelled, heard, spoken, or sung. I knew this was a peculiar obsession, of course, but I thought writers were supposed to be peculiar. I thought it was just a "problem," that it could be solved, and that, once solved, the enigmatic whoosh of ordinary experience would become my "great subject"—that I could then proceed to celebrate the ravishing complexity and sheer intellectual pleasure of simply being alive in the present moment forever after. I thought.

So I began by writing poems, quickly shifted to fiction, abandoned that for pharmaceutically assisted pastiche, and abandoned that for gonzo reportage—always trying to get out of the book,