

# Art & Design Education **Theses Exhibition**



Pratt Institute  
**2008-2009**

**April 30, 2009**  
South Hall 210, 5:00 pm

# Histories of Design Education and Craft

# Melinda Wax

## Out of the Bauhaus and Into the Future

This thesis asks if the basic art and design education, as founded at the Bauhaus and continued in foundation year courses at art and design schools throughout the world, is enough to prepare young artists and designers for the world that awaits them upon completion of their studies. To answer this question, the thesis explores Bauhaus history and the spread of its practitioners' ideas and practices in the United States. The thesis then examines foundation year programs at Pratt Institute and Parsons School of Design.

The thesis argues that current debates about how to change and improve foundation year courses reflect certain continuities with the past. The defining challenge in 1919 Germany, at Pratt in the 1940s, and even now, continues to be, how to teach students the multitude of skills they need to excel in the marketplace and contribute to society, while giving them the knowledge they need to remake that very marketplace. The thesis concludes with recommendations for the integration of sustainability, interdisciplinary studies, design and critical thinking, and the education of the “whole person” as possible strategies for transformation and change.



# Jane Kelton

## **Basket-Making 101: The Case For Textile Arts in the Postmodern Classroom**

This thesis is an historical and theoretical attempt to understand why textiles and fiber are not a more prominent part of the art education curriculum for K-12 education, especially in urban classrooms. Although fabric and fiber are a common denominator across diverse cultures, and at the same time, rich in specific cultural and personal meaning, their potential remains untapped. One of the reasons for this has to do with the place of textiles and fiber in the canons of art. This thesis employs medium theory from the discipline of sociology as a framework for surveying and analyzing changes in the status of textile arts in the history of western art.

The thesis demonstrates that while textile art is a relatively new term in art history, the aesthetic manipulation of fibers is an ancient and continuous practice. In cultures in which orality was the dominant media, textile arts enjoyed an elevated status, paralleled by a high level of artisan skill development. With the onset of script and print cultures, their status declined, as society became more stratified and specialized. However, postmodern thought in the electronic, media-dominated, late 20th century challenges



the categories and power structures that have marginalized textile arts and enables the re-emergence of textiles within the art world. At the same time, the thesis shows that the field of art education endorses a more culturally inclusive curriculum and the incorporation of visual culture in art instruction. The thesis argues that the convergence of two major shifts -- in the art world and in art education -- provides an opening for textile and fiber art in the K-12 classroom.

# Engaging Adolescents as Artists



# Celia Caro

## **Crafting: A New Vision For Art Education**

Current art and design practices are blurring the boundaries between art, craft and design, yet within the field of art education, there still exists an anti-craft bias. This conventional bias not only overlooks the comprehensive nature of most contemporary art practices, but also fails to see the great potential of craft as a teaching tool. This thesis explores the existing and potential benefits and challenges of teaching a craft-based curriculum at the high school level.

Through a case study of a high school ceramics studio, the thesis asserts that the democratic nature of the craft process teaches discrete skills and improves students' manual and cognitive development, socio-cultural consciousness and ecological awareness. This thesis argues that such skills have broader applications for student learning beyond the specific field of ceramics. A craft-based curriculum helps students develop into creative thinkers and active citizens.



# Kelly Oh

## Visual Experience as a Critical Variable in Artistic Development

The thesis explores the effectiveness of aesthetic learning for pre-adolescent students' artistic development. Based on an analysis of the relationship between aesthetic learning and visual perception, the thesis considers three components of the aesthetic experience: observation of art, critical visual inquiry and student responses.



Through a case study of teaching and learning in an arts academy within a New York City public middle school, the thesis shows how visual experiences in an art classroom influence students' artistic development. Students begin to form discriminating perceptions and biases through their observation of art and critical visual inquiry. The skills learned through visual inquiry are incorporated, even as students begin to make their own art. The case study also reveals that language plays a significant role in aesthetic learning. The thesis argues that visual learning in the art classroom is a key component of student's artistic growth.

Compare these two silhouette figures. Why is level 4 better?

Level 4

Level 1

Level 4 Silhouettes

Level 2 Silhouettes

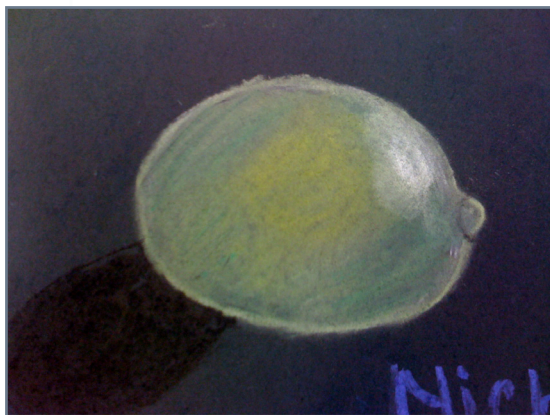
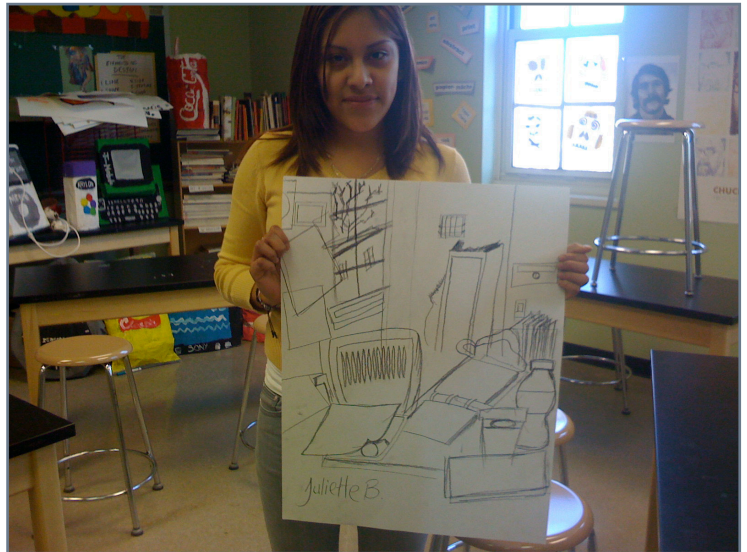
Level 1 Silhouettes

# Amy Richards

## **The Untrained Artist: Motivations for Teaching Adolescents to Draw**

This thesis explores the relationship between observational drawing and adolescent artistic development through two case studies of high school art classrooms in Brooklyn and South Africa. The thesis argues that adolescents with no prior art instruction can be taught drawing skills under certain pedagogical conditions. The thesis shows that high school students were able to draw realistically when teachers employed a methodical process which emphasized that talent for drawing is acquired and not inherited and that students must learn to suspend their existing schemas in order to be able to observe in new ways.

Through, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of student work the thesis identifies and describes effective methods for teaching observational drawing to adolescents with little prior art instruction





# Self-Identity, Motivation, and Art Making

# Emily Remensperger

## Exploring Issues of Identity in a Self Portraiture Curriculum for Disabled Adults

This thesis examines the impact that using self-portraiture in an art curriculum for disabled adults has on their self image and perception. By designing the curriculum, implementing the lessons and recording both the students experiences as well as my own, the study aimed to better understand not only the effects of self portraiture on the self esteem of the disabled population I taught, but the larger implications that using self-portraiture might have in furthering our acceptance and understanding of the diversity of all art students. This thesis argues that the awareness needed to recreate ones image in the form of a self-portrait engenders the artist with a stronger sense of identity and purpose. Therefore, using the medium of self-portraiture with disabled adults gives this socially marginalized group of individuals a voice with which to communicate their experiences, and art in turns offers us an arena where we can interpret those experiences.

The self study aspect of the thesis is equally significant in that it provides a space and method with which to evaluate the importance of the teacher's role in the art experience of the students.

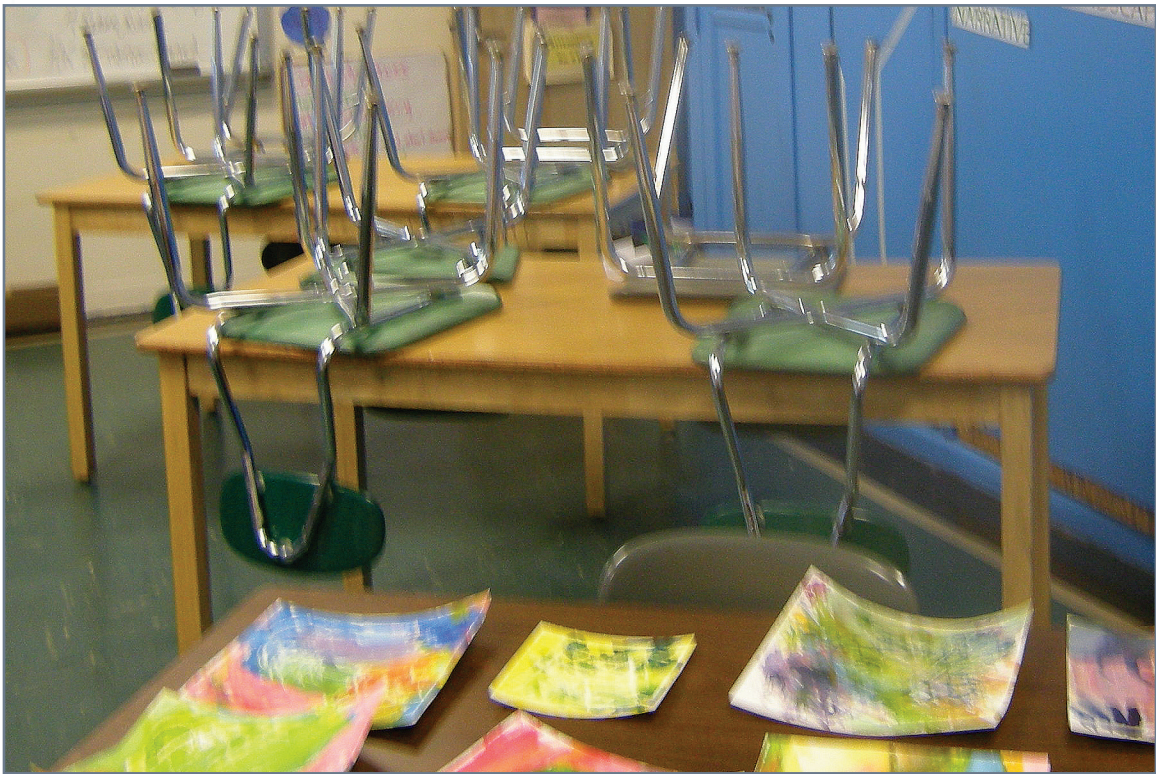


# Jacqueline Cullen

## **“All About Me”:**

### **Adolescent Self-Perception and Motivation in Art Education**

This thesis explores the nature of adolescent participation in visual arts education through a case study of an urban middle school teacher and her students. The thesis demonstrates how an emphasis on traditional skills and techniques in the art classroom can both motivate and cause frustration among middle school students depending on their grade level, their individual standards, and their teacher’s interventions. The thesis argues that students’ self-perception of themselves as artists influences the choices they make about their current and future art education.



# Arts Integration and Play



# Stephanie Podosek

## Literacy Instruction as a Catalyst for Arts Integration

This thesis explores arts integration at the elementary level with a special focus on literacy. Through a study of art teachers who incorporate non-traditional art resources in the art room, the thesis shows how literacy instruction can strengthen curriculum design, pedagogy, and learning in the arts. Contrary to scholarly concerns that arts integration can diminish art learning, this thesis argues that such an outcome is not inevitable. The thesis identifies effective approaches to arts integration through case studies of three elementary schools and their art teachers.

The case studies of PS 154 and PS 123 in Brooklyn, New York and Clinton Elementary School in Central New York exhibit effective arts integration programs implemented in diverse situations. While each school varies in the degree of support for arts integration, the art teachers' commitment and ability to maintain a strong arts focus, in the face of challenging conditions, drives these programs. The teachers in all three schools share common approaches to integration through the use of books, writing in art, and storytelling and discussion. Students in all three case studies write and talk about art, and at the same time, create art that demonstrates an understanding of content as well as a certain degree of technical mastery.



PS 154 Mini-Museum day—students critiquing art through writing



Student creating a house, inspired by a Francis Guy painting.



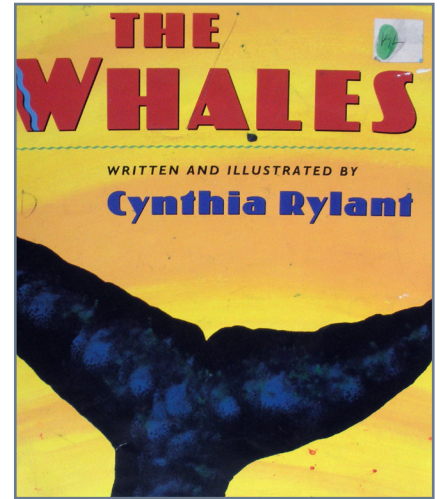
Francis Guy, A Winter Scene in Brooklyn

# Arlana Hutchinson

## Literacy, English Language Learners and the Visual Arts Curriculum

There has been much debate in arts education about whether to integrate the visual arts with academic subjects. One of the legitimate concerns is that students' creative opportunities may be diminished by the introduction of different subject matter into the arts curriculum. This thesis argues that literacy instruction can be effectively integrated into the visual arts curriculum without risking creative exploration. However, in order to successfully integrate literacy in the visual arts curriculum, the visual arts teacher needs to have the proper resources at her disposal, good interpersonal skills, and an awareness and sensitivity to students' culture and language.

This case study of an art teacher and her students in a high-poverty Brooklyn elementary school focuses on arts integration through literacy. The case study is set against the backdrop of school and city pressures on students and teachers to improve English Language Arts test scores, especially among students whose dominant language is other than English. The thesis employs action research methodology to analyze teaching and learning in regular art classes as well as in after-school and Saturday school activities.



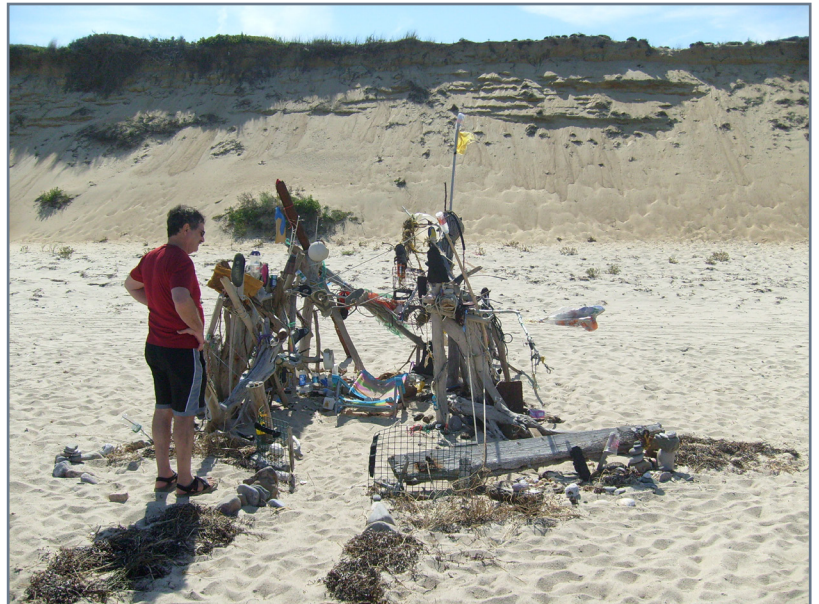


# Jane Rothberg

## Opening the Creative Process through Play

This thesis explores how play in elementary art education can foster learning and creativity. The thesis argues that developmentally appropriate play stimulates the creative process by addressing students' developmental needs and natural learning systems. The thesis builds on the scholarship related to play in the classroom by offering a developmentally appropriate approach that can be realized in traditional, elementary school art classrooms.

The thesis first examines the scholarship on child development that suggests that play is not just what children want to do, but is part of how they are biologically programmed to learn. The thesis then examines the application of these theoretical insights within certain alternative early childhood education models such as the Reggio Emilia school and the classroom of writer, teacher, and theorist, Vivian Paley. Both models



are grounded in children's developmental needs and natural learning styles, and are sustained within supportive cultural and educational contexts.

The thesis maintains that such models for developmentally appropriate play-based learning can be extended into the context of New York City's public elementary schools. The thesis provides sample unit plans that integrate a play-based learning approach within the public school environment. The lessons strive to foster age-appropriate play, from grades pre-Kindergarten to fifth, in which students go beyond mastery of method and materials and ask themselves not just how they created their art, but why.