



Exhibition of Theses *2006-2007*

Art & Design Education
Pratt Institute

Art & Horticulture in the Early Childhood Curriculum

Megan Elyse Driscoll

In this thesis, I explore how teachers used art and horticulture in early childhood education during the late 19th and early 20th century. I argue that certain developmental and societal factors contributed to a curriculum that bridged the divide between art and horticulture. The thesis asserts that societal factors also contributed to the waning of such practices by the mid-twentieth century. However, recent efforts to link these two fields of study in early childhood classrooms suggest that learning objectives in contemporary early childhood classrooms can be met with the inclusion of art and horticulture

I investigate three fields of literature; curriculum development, historical scholarship in early childhood education, and contemporary literature on the inclusion of art and horticulture in the early childhood curriculum. The literature review helps inform case studies of early childhood classrooms, both historically and in the present. The core case study analyzes how teachers taught art and horticulture in the Pratt Institute Model Kindergarten circa 1900. I then turn to how teachers are currently using art and horticulture in early childhood programs. The following research questions guide the case studies: How and why were art and horticulture used from a developmental perspective? How did the social context of the school contribute to this inclusion? What was the relationship between the use of art and horticulture as educational tools? How did the inclusion of art and horticulture activities in the early childhood classroom change the way teachers taught?



Pratt Institute Kindergarten Garden circa 1896
photo credit: Pratt Institute Archive Collection

Integrating Art and Environmental Education

Rachel Goldsmith

In this thesis, I examine the state of art and environmental education in American public schools by a review of the research, policy and practice in each of the fields. I argue for the integration of both fields into the general curriculum based on two overlapping rationales. First, integration reinforces learning through the arts. The arts improve certain cognitive abilities which are needed to fully develop students' intellectual capacity. Second, integration secures a place for environmental education in the curriculum. Environmental education helps bridge disciplines because it lends itself to interdisciplinary projects which connect learning to the world outside of the classroom. Therefore, interdisciplinary projects that incorporate both the arts and the environment can sustain learning and foster relationships between the classroom and the broader community.

I provide an example of a high school unit plan that integrates the two disciplines into the curriculum by using refuse to make art. The unit plan demonstrates that integrating both fields into the curriculum can increase cognitive skills needed for learning in all disciplines, help sustain art practice during periods of fiscal retrenchment, and foster students' capacities to function as interdependent members of society.



"The Social Mirror" by Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

Arts Integration Strategies for Children with Learning Disabilities

Sara Fromboluti

In this thesis, I argue that children with learning disabilities benefit in certain situations from arts integration. Students are better able to learn and retain more complex and abstract material through arts integration techniques and projects. Additionally, they are more actively engaged and have an easier time participating and working as a group when involved in an arts-based project or activity.

I base this argument on a case study of arts integration in a school for special needs students. Across the institution, teachers use the arts to address individual learning issues stemming from a single learning challenge as well as those stemming from an amalgam of learning difficulties and student needs. Specifically, the thesis examines teacher-directed projects in several self-contained, middle school classrooms. Through observations, interviews, participant observation and document review, I illustrate the divergent approaches teachers take as they use the arts to help students grow both cognitively and socially.

Developmentally Disabled Adults and Their Art Practice

Kerri R. Tabarcea

In this thesis I explore the theoretical, historical, and practical significance of creative art experiences and studio practice for developmentally disabled adults. Through a case study of a contemporary art program for developmentally disabled adults the thesis argues that creative art experiences stimulate and reinforce autonomy, long term engagement in the arts through meaningful work, as well as independent living and social growth.

The literature review considers the benefits of art and creative experiences across three different fields of knowledge: art education with special populations, disability in social and community contexts, and art in adult education. I then provide an historical overview of disability and the mental institution in the United States, examining how recent legal and policy developments enabled the implementation of educational and recreational opportunities for disabled populations to support their socialization. The history underscores the reasons why supports for autonomy, long-term engagement, independence and socialization were, and continue to be, so important, given the inequalities and injustices endured by those with disabilities.

I then turn to a participant case study of the art studio in a day-service program for cognitively disabled adults. The study considers the degree to which studio practice and creative art experiences support social development and independent living, as well as the studio teacher's role in the process.



Example of artisan projects by Urban Day Village clients

An Educational Opportunity for Artistically Motivated Students

Tyler H. Matta

In this thesis, I explore the educational opportunities provided for artistically motivated students in a high school arts magnet program. Through an analysis of pedagogy, curriculum, program structure, admissions procedures, and teacher/student interactions, I demonstrate that the development of technical skills alone does not necessarily nurture artistic ability. Students also need to develop conceptual skills and art-specific language so that they can produce thought provoking artwork.

I argue that students in the arts magnet program develop this type of artistic ability because they are artistically motivated and because teachers are committed to sustaining a strong sense of community. I use the term artistic motivation rather than artistic talent, because it suggests that artistic ability is teachable and learnable; instead of something that is innate. However, without a strong sense of community and supportive student/teacher relationships, even artistically motivated students would not thrive.

Hip Hop Graffiti Writing in the Classroom

Yarrow K. Lutz

Hip Hop graffiti is a controversial art form, mostly due to its illegal status. It is also controversial in educational contexts because it represents a resistant, anti-establishment art form that many educators do not endorse. Yet, Hip Hop graffiti is one of the few internationally recognized art forms invented and developed by youth. In this thesis I argue that Hip Hop graffiti should be approached as a complex art form which can facilitate multifaceted learning for young people, both inside and outside schools. The thesis supports this argument by highlighting promising practices in Hip Hop graffiti writing through case studies of a citywide support network and a school-based art program.

These case studies reveal that the pedagogy of Hip Hop graffiti writing helps validate youth identity because it focuses on popular culture and visual literacy. In addition, it provides young people with mastery over the Hip Hop graffiti aesthetic which is now necessary for successful careers in graphic design and fashion. However, the case studies also illustrate how difficult it is to sustain these practices due to Hip Hop graffiti's marginalization in art education, especially at the secondary level. I demonstrate that an alternative support system for teaching Hip Hop graffiti has developed outside of traditional educational systems, and therefore sustains the continuation of Hip Hop graffiti pedagogy.



Image by Jimmy Tran, 2004

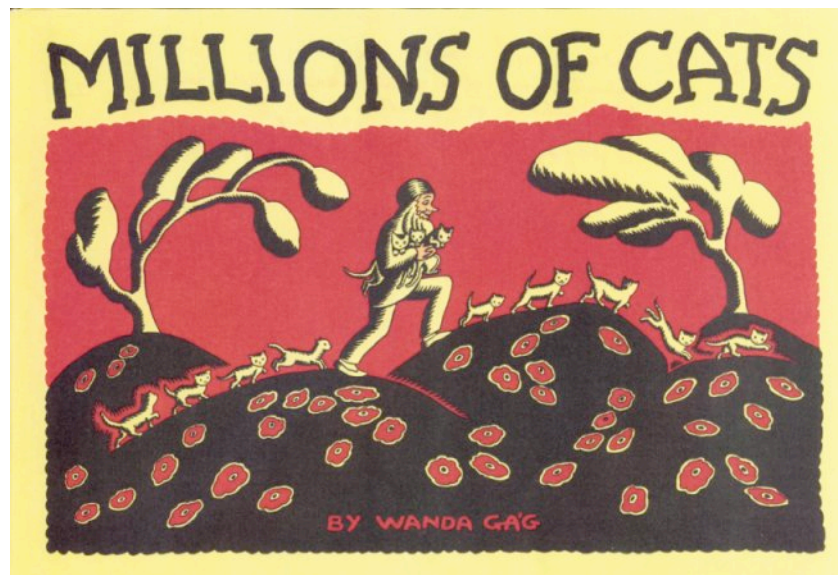
Unlocking the Potential for Picture Books in Art Education

Katherine M. Rothschild

In this thesis I examine how three art teachers, in various art education environments and in different stages in their careers, currently use picture books. Framed by the lives and teaching practices of the three art teachers, and set against the historical background of picture book production from World War II to the present, I show how each teachers' style of teaching is reflected in her preference for certain genres of literature.

I argue that teachers do not initially realize that they use the picture book for multiple applications in the classroom. The research demonstrates that the picture book can be used as a literacy tool, a way to capture the imagination of students, to teach art techniques or to make an important point. It also shows that thinking of the picture book as a work of art is a way to introduce students to the visual world in an accessible format and the format itself is a means to create intimacy between the reader and those who are being read to.

I show that picture books remain an untapped resource in the art classroom where they can be used for multiple purposes including art making as well as literacy development. However, as the world increasingly turns towards technology, the thesis considers the potential for a decline in the production and use of picture books.



Using Critique in the Elementary Art Classroom

Sarah Cosimano

In this thesis I examine how critique in the art classroom is used with elementary age children and how it affects their artwork. Scholars have studied why and how critique is used within the high school and college art classroom, however not many scholars have addressed the use of critique in the elementary art room. I argue that critique can be used with children who are as young as eight as a tool to help them appreciate each other's artwork, talk about art, form new ideas and solve problems in different ways.

Through a case study of an elementary art classroom, the thesis considers the full range of critique: teacher or student discussions about artwork (including informal peer to peer and teacher to student interactions) and formal discussions about art led by a teacher. The case study demonstrates that there are multiple ways to use critique with elementary students and that as they become more familiar with the process they are able to adapt it into their own art making. The students become better at talking about art and are able to use the process of critique to talk about their projects with each other, as well as make changes based on their peers' suggestions. Through a photographic analysis that accompanies the text, the thesis illustrates how the process contributed to changes in student work over time.



Part of a second grade cityscape collaboration project, before students had critiqued the placement of the buildings.



The same second grade cityscape collaboration project, after the students discussed placement of their buildings and figures.

Zeynep Oz

My thesis examines the state of art education in Turkey in the context of major social, cultural and educational reforms in the 20th century, beginning with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The thesis first considers the significant educational reforms that took place during the creation of the country, including John Dewey's visit to Turkey in 1923 and his suggestions on how to improve the state of education. Set against the historical backdrop of the Western movement in art that took place during the Ottoman Empire and accelerated after the creation of Turkey, the thesis compares changes in the art world to the current state of art education in a sampling of programs.

I argue that even though the emphasis placed on art is increasing rapidly with art biennales, the opening of small galleries and large museums funded by banks and the private sector, the state of art education in colleges and universities is still weak.



SÜLEYMAN SAİM TEKCAN (1940)

.....
Etching
2005
107x40 cm

Democratic Pedagogies and the Function of Art Education in a Unique Community

Benicia Hill

This thesis chronicles the third year of the Brooklyn Free School in Brooklyn, New York, with a particular focus on how a beginning art educator developed and applied a visual arts curriculum based on the school's democratic pedagogy. The thesis considers both the opportunities and challenges the art educator encountered as she worked with students of all ages in this unique progressive environment. The case study illustrates the natural fusion between art exploration and the students' self-directed learning. I argue that within the context of a school that is committed to democratic pedagogy, art practice serves as an interdisciplinary tool that broadens students' learning in the areas of math, science, culture, politics, history, and society.

The case study unfolds against the historical backdrop of free school education, from the Summerhill School in Suffolk, England in the 1960s to the revival of free school education in the 1990s. The study charts the development of the Brooklyn Free School and how, when it opened in 2003, the founders eschewed state funding, developmental blueprints, lesson plans, standardized testing, and government standards. Instead, the study demonstrates that other supports, such as community funding, parental engagement, and a national free-school network, provide the necessary resources and knowledge to sustain the school's unique mission.

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Melissa Stidd

This thesis is a historical study of art education at two independent art schools; Pratt Institute of New York and the Bauhaus of Germany. It begins with the founding of Pratt Institute in the late 1880's and ends with the aftermath of the closing of the Bauhaus in the late 1930's. Despite their different social and historical contexts, the two schools shared several themes in common; a shared dislike of the traditional art academy education, a socialist-based philosophy embedded in the founding principles of both schools, and a close relationship between art education philosophy and practice.

The evolution of art education philosophy and practice in these two institutions was due, in part, to the cross-Atlantic interactions between teachers in the two schools. The relationship was more fluid, and began much earlier, than most scholars have argued. I present research that highlights the nature of the link between Pratt Institute and the Bauhaus and how it influenced art education.

The Role of Canon Examination and Revision upon the Seventeenth-century Literary Fairy Tale

Rebecca Stevens

My thesis examines the active role folklore, specifically the fairy tale, plays in the process that children employ in understanding, creating, and structuring their cultural and personal identities. Stories in general, and fairy tales in particular, change over time according to the needs of the community. By examining this process of narrative change as it occurs in the fairy tale, students understand that cultural narratives are not absolutes and can be questioned and affected through the creative process of revision. I argue that by questioning the canon of the literary fairy tale genre through the process of relocating subverted texts, as well as actively revising canonical texts, students learn to question absolutes in literature, as well as within the broader cultural arena, and develop an understanding of their ability to create more personally and culturally appropriate versions of classical works of art.



The Role of Art History in Secondary Education

Kathleen O’Leary

In this thesis I examine the developmental process by which art history was integrated into a high school classical curriculum through a case study of The Brooklyn Latin School in New York City. I demonstrate that although the discipline of art history has become an essential component of the school’s classical curriculum, this was not necessarily an intended course of action. Instead, through a year-long discovery process, the school realized that art history provided an essential foundation for an interdisciplinary approach to the classical curriculum. Thus, the eventual use of art history as a vehicle for the integration of subject areas was developed by teachers, with the support and guidance of the school’s instructional leader, who discovered its value through experimentation, on-going assessment, and revision. I argue that teacher and principal leadership was a key variable in this process because it nourished thoughtful and reflective professional development and cross-disciplinary communication.

This thesis describes how the discovery process occurred in stages that built on each other. The teaching of art history in The Brooklyn Latin School created a forum for students and teachers to examine works of art in the context of multiple subject areas and it also enabled subject area teachers to use art historical methods, including visual resources, for teaching their discipline. This use of visual sources for teaching lead to further integration and connections across the isolated disciplines, and eventually helped teachers support and sustain pedagogy focused on analysis and argumentation.

Based on a review of the literature in the field, interviews, and field observations, this thesis offers an alternative to the traditional fulfillment of art requirements through studio art classes and the isolation of subject areas within secondary education. Based on the research, this thesis considers how art history can be used as a common ground for teachers to: expand learning opportunities through the use of visual sources; build and reinforce interdisciplinary curriculum; and develop a pedagogy focused on critical thinking. This thesis considers the implications of this theory in action.



Brooklyn Latin students visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art