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No Abstract

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The Role of the Arts in the Humanities and Liberal Arts Classroom

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THERE are at least two compelling reasons to incorporate the visual arts (by which I mean architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts) in humanities and social science teaching at all levels.¹ The first is the generative role of architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts in the education of the senses. The second is our democracy's need for an informed citizenry in an iconic age.²

THE EDUCATION OF THE SENSES

Western higher education is still coming to grips with an insight first demonstrated by the Impressionists and later validated in the psychology of perception: perception is an act of construction. The world does not appear; it is made to appear. Perception is not a passive registration of a world which exists apart from it. Perception is an activity; in it a person forms the world which appears, including the ways in which the person appears in that world. Architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts play a formative role in this perceptual process.

In large part, perception is learned in infancy through interaction with the child's built environment (the cultural landscape). Culturally-based structures of perception are deeply embedded in the child's body and its world. Indeed, to divide experience into body and world falsifies a fundamental unity of

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the two. Internal and external appear in mutual relationship in the act of perception; they "are part and parcel of the same thing" (Ittelson & Kilpatrick, cited in Ornstein, 1971, p. 184). According to Merleau-Ponty (1962):

External perception and the perception of one's own body vary in conjunction because they are two facets of one and the same act...Every external perception is immediately synonymous with a certain perception of my body. (pp. 205-206)

For developing infants, learning to experience and control their bodies and to focus and respond to the perceptual world are elements of a single task. Even sitting up, rolling over and walking are skills learned in infancy; they are saturated with cultural influence. Different cultures represent different traditions of perceptual structuring. "Each culture," says anthropologist E.T. Hall, "has its own characteristic manner of locomotion, sitting, standing, reclining and gesturing" (1980, p. 75).³

We learn the kinesics of our culture and forget them, but they are buried deep in our bodies: even our most intimate rhythms are artifacts of cultural learning. Since "internal" and "external" perception are mutually coordinated, these bodily facts pertain to our experience of the world as well.

The developmental task of structuring body/world is accomplished within and in relation to the cultural landscape. The deep structures of the acculturated body correspond to those of the cultural landscape to which it acculturates. Even our direct temporal and spatial experience are permeated with cultural learning (Hall, 1969, p. 153).⁴

Architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts transform and redirect the cultural landscape, which is simply the embedded sedimentation of their past and present. Insights into perceptual structuring and the role of the cultural landscape have profound implications for the practice of the arts, as well as for the humanities and the social sciences.

For example, history has not yet fully told the story of the early development of science in the West. Western science is, of

course, based on the mathematicization of the physical world. The spatial continuum was first subjected to uniform mathematical analysis in the vanishing point perspective paintings of the Renaissance. Through the application of this mathematical analysis, painters could create the experience of a seemingly consistent and rational perceptual space. Soon this abstract spatial construction was applied to the design of city squares, then to private estates, and then to the organization of larger and larger units of design. Alberti provided the mathematics for painters in 1435; nearly two centuries later, Newton, Leibniz and Descartes completed the analytical mathematicization of space in the calculus. They lived in a cultural landscape permeated with the (no longer new) space invented and created in Renaissance painting.⁵

Renaissance painting opened a new distance between viewer and what is represented in the painting through the convention of the "window." This distance is rewritten in landscape and urban design in terms of the "view."⁶ Without extensive research one can only speculate on the relationship between this new spatial experience and Descartes' division of the world into two discontinuous realms, the "cogitans" (equivalent to the viewer) and the "extensa" (equivalent to the view).

"Renaissance space" and the structures of thought and experience that correlate with it became normative in the structure of experience in the West. Any awareness that this space was constructed eventually vanished and was replaced with a sense that it was a "natural" space. As John Russell says in *The Meanings of Modern Art*:

By taking as its first premise a single point of vision, perspective had stabilized a visual experience. It had bestowed order on chaos; it allowed elaborate and systematized cross-referencing, and quite soon it had become a touchstone of coherence and evenmindedness. To "lose all sense of perspective" is to this day a synonym for mental collapse. Yet perspective, before Cezanne, was fundamentally one of the sanctified frauds that keep the world turning: a conspiracy to deceive, in other

words. Cezanne rebuilt the experience of seeing. (1981, p. 31)

Many contemporary artists, architects and designers are aware of the vital role art, design and architecture play in the education of the senses. They are working toward transforming the perceptual structuring processes embedded in our culture. Two examples will have to suffice, one from the fine arts and the other from architecture.

[Artist Robert Irwin in 1982, said] when I walk down the street I no longer, at least to the same degree, bring the world into focus in the same way. My whole visual structure is changed by the fact that I'm now using an entirely different process of going at it. So the implications of that kind of art are very rash—I mean, in time, they have the ability to change every single thing in the culture itself. (Wechsler, 1982, p. 102)

According to architect Christopher Alexander:

When you build a thing you cannot merely build that thing in isolation, but must also repair the world around it, and within it so that the larger world at that one place becomes more coherent, and more whole. (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977, p. xiii)

Of course [says Alexander, such a] thing is physically different, but it is also psychically quite different. It's completely different to live in such a place. It causes genuine political and emotional change. (Alexander, cited in Grabow, 1983, p. 159).

The humanities and social sciences cannot adequately carry out their investigations without developing an understanding of the role of the cultural landscape in the topics they study. They cannot bring that understanding into their classrooms without making use of the techniques, materials, methods and processes

of architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts. Education in the humanities and the social sciences requires art as much as education in art requires the social sciences and humanities.

Lawrence E. Sullivan (1988) has shown that canoe building, music, pottery, basketry, weaving and architecture can be prime metaphors of experience and meaning for entire cultures, playing the role that the metaphor of "text" now plays in ours. Robert Farris Thompson (1984) demonstrates in *The Flash of the Spirit* that the experience of Africans in the New World must be understood in relationship to interlinked systems of meaning and material culture brought from Africa. E.T. Hall (1959, 1969, 1980) has repeatedly revealed the ways intercultural contact is hindered by the different spatial and temporal worlds of the participants. This has implications both for the conduct of foreign policy and for an evaluation of anthropological findings.

GENERATING AN INFORMED CITIZENRY FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IN AN ICONIC AGE

Our culture is rapidly becoming less linear, sequential and literary and is becoming more simultaneous, pictographic and iconic. It is an epochal transition, perhaps as great a watershed as the development and spread of writing 5,500 years ago. This transformation of our means of communication poses special challenges in a democratic society. At issue is the fundamental reformation of our public and political life taking place as a result of the increasingly iconic quality of contemporary discourse.

Like commerce and entertainment, politics is now conducted largely on television, a medium so visual it is perhaps best to think of its verbal dimension as a distraction for the conscious mind so that the visual dimension can affect the unconscious mind. Like the corporate market researchers they resemble, political media advisors understand this well. As a result, political rhetoric is becoming more iconic and less literary.

The role of the Academy is not to bemoan the impact of television on our political process, but to help us understand

how to incorporate this new medium into a truly democratic political arena. Since Thomas Jefferson, American political theorists have viewed education as the greatest protector of an electoral process. Educated and well-informed citizens have the critical resources to recognize and reject demagoguery, disinformation and the easy half-truth. One powerful motive behind the goal of universal public education was the creation of a literate, informed electorate capable of judging candidates and issues on the basis of information and reason. We are now faced with the task of reimagining education for an informed electorate in an iconic age.

Primary and secondary education in the United States are designed to create a fairly sophisticated reader. We aim to teach students that all writing comes from a point of view and to recognize the point of view of any particular piece they read. We help them to identify bias and to understand the various rhetorical strategies by which bias is disguised as dispassion. They are taught about the difference between fiction and reportage, between fantasy and argument, between reasoned argument and the simple restatement of the author's point of view. English teachers, history teachers and social studies teachers across the country work to prepare their students to take part in the great American experiment.⁷

Most political information, and especially that which is most potent and effective, no longer comes in texts, has no identifiable authors, and is not read. Even print media give more and more potency to images: to photo-journalism, to magazine illustrations, to billboards. In this context, citizens need to be sophisticated about images and moving images. They need a critical insight comparable to that which we strive to create with respect to the printed and spoken word. Magazine ads, 30-second television ads, 20-second news "sound bites" and 90-minute "presidential debates" are all organized for iconic, not literary, effect.

In our two hundred years of teaching verbal literacy for an informed electorate, we have learned that critical, informed reading requires writing experience. To learn how to read effectively, one must learn how to write. One must have first-

hand experience of the various rhetorical strategies, how they are used, their effects and their limitations.

This principle applies to icons as well as to essays. One cannot understand television until one has made a video, and it is surprisingly educating to videotape a school event and then edit the raw footage into three pieces, each of which tells a radically different story than the other two. When students take and show pictures, they learn firsthand that a picture is *not* a reflection of reality. An informed reader must be a writer; an informed looker must be a producer. The principle extends beyond television to include journalistic photography, advertising and other forms of iconic persuasion.

Recent changes in popular technology hold out the promise of a revitalized freedom of the press. In "the old days" one great power of the free press was that presses were inexpensive. Ordinary people could have access to the means to produce handbills, treatises and pamphlets and to infuse them into the body politic as alternatives to the official newspapers and journals of the times. The press was free in the sense of being uncontrollable, accessible, and democratic. With the ascendancy of television this has changed: broadcast television is tightly controlled by powerful interests and its production continues to be fundamentally inaccessible to citizens.

Until recently there have been no alternatives to broadcast television, but this is beginning to change. With the creation of inexpensive video cameras and video copying and playback machines, we are once more approaching a time when ordinary people again will be able to create and distribute idiosyncratic political documents in the primary political medium. For example, a home video of one of the escaped leaders of the Chinese students' democracy movement has received significant airplay as a symbol of both their aspirations and their plight.

"Underground videos" are not as immediately powerful as the official media. Neither were the underground handbills of the past, not even those of the great pamphleteers like Tom Paine, but the tradition of the free and open popular press has had a profound influence on the history of electoral democracy.

BRINGING THE ARTS INTO HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE CLASSROOMS

Few humanists or social scientists have been trained in the education of the senses or in iconic communication. Even among scholars who know that these are important issues, many feel unable to bring them effectively into their classrooms without additional resources. In my own field, the academic study of religion, there is a growing recognition of the visual, environmental and kinaesthetic dimensions of human experience. Most scholars have not had training in architecture and urban planning, the design professions or the fine arts. They need substantial assistance to be able to address their newfound concerns.⁸

Those of us who have learned to think visually must develop tools, resources and curricula for our colleagues to use in the classrooms to investigate the impact of the arts in the cultural landscape. Professional colleges of art, architecture and design and the corresponding university and college departments should not merely consume contemporary visions of higher education; we should contribute vital elements in their generation.

The two projects described below may provide models of resources that can assist teachers to integrate material culture in the humanities and social sciences. The first project, The Image Bank for Teaching the Academic Study of Religion, is funded through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project will generate a set of about 6,000 annotated and cross-referenced slides as a teaching tool in the academic study of religion. The first slide sets should be ready for use in Fall, 1990. The second project, An Integrated Curriculum, K-12, represents a few steps toward an education that provides not only "discipline-based" arts education but also "arts-based" discipline education.

THE IMAGE BANK FOR TEACHING THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION⁹

When it is completed in 1990, the Image Bank will be an annotated, cross-referenced collection of about 6,000 slide images of religion in material culture. The collection will be

global, historical and contemporary, including images from around the world and ranging in time from the Paleolithic (e.g., the Venus of Willendorf) to the present (e.g., posters from the Religious/Political revolution in Iran). It will include high art and architecture (e.g., Chartres cathedral and the Taj Mahal), vernacular art and architecture (e.g., Canelos Quechua pottery, Tibetan weaving and nomadic architecture) and ethnographic images of contemporary religion (e.g., a Church of Canada potluck, a Brazilian Day of the Dead festival and a pig sacrifice in China).

Material culture is an original, engendering aspect of religion, not simply an illustration of verbal or literary material. Yet teachers in religious studies have not been trained to understand its role in religion or to present visual materials in the classroom. For example, although the canonization of texts, such as the Bible or the Pali Sermons, is often taught, the canonization of images, such as that of the Christ or the Buddha, is seldom taught. This is so despite the fact that sculptural and pictorial representation of the Buddha played a critical role in the development of Buddhism as a popular religion. One will also find that most American students are more likely to know "what the Buddha looks like" than "what the Pali Canon says." Our students' experience of Buddhism substantiates the notion that religious ideas are often spread through material as well as literary means.

The field of religious studies was chosen for this project in part because of its key role in many general education curricula. In many colleges, the "world religions" and "introduction to religion" courses now serve as integrators for the humanities and social science fields. These courses give an overview of the history of world civilization, provide a window on the cultural dimensions of global conflict and supply a way of perceiving many of the modern quests for personal meaning.

Teachers in religious studies have developed an increasing respect for and interest in the non-verbal dimensions of religion. It has become clear that a text-and-speech oriented approach to religion reflects our own religious history and projects a Judeo-Islamic-Christian notion of *word* and *book* indiscriminately.

Such a view also distorts the evidence, effacing the vital role that visual, architectural and kinaesthetic expression actually play in the life of religion, even within the Judaic traditions.

Teachers using the Image Bank will be able to select slides according to the needs of their individual classes, using the index as a guide. Each slide comes with an annotation approximately one page in length. Additionally, each order comes with an essay on the effective use of slides in class, a second essay on the role of the arts in the particular tradition(s) under consideration, and a third essay addressing issues in the field of religion and the arts.

Teachers also receive suggestions on incorporating art activities into their classroom in a way that is pedagogically effective and non-threatening to students. One activity is based on Yoruba mask-making traditions; students actually construct masks in class. Another involves having small groups create rituals with all the necessary paraphernalia. A third asks students to consider the human image as a metaphor for the divine.¹⁰

The Image Bank catalogue, index, images and accompanying instructional materials will allow teachers with no special training in architecture and urban planning, the design professions or the fine arts to use material culture effectively in their classrooms. The Image Bank will enable teachers to incorporate architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts into their teaching about religion, to design and use visual images in unique and personal ways, and to integrate art with social science and humanities in a synaesthetic, polymethodic and multidisciplinary classroom setting. It can also provide both a model and a resource for similar developments throughout the liberal arts.

INTEGRATED ART EDUCATION, K-12: A WORKSHOP

This workshop was developed at California College of Arts and Crafts as part of the Basic Arts Services in the Community (BASIC). It was offered in 1985, 1986 and 1987. BASIC is a set of workshops intended to support primary and secondary school

arts teachers and to support the arts in the curriculum. The workshops carry credit and can be applied by teachers to their continuing education requirements. Similar support can be provided to school districts by any institution of higher learning with instruction in art and art theory.

The workshop on the integrated curriculum was designed to help teachers integrate architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts into humanities and social science education from kindergarten through senior high school. Students taught sequentially and consecutively in such a curriculum would develop a more sophisticated ability to see and to think visually than our current graduates. The integrated curriculum is *not* meant to replace instruction in art and does not provide art instruction, but it might lead to "drawing across the curriculum," much as we now have writing across the curriculum.

The workshops begin with a discussion of the two points which occupy the first half of this paper—the role of architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts in the construction of perception and the need for "critical seeing" in educating a democratic electorate in an iconic age.

The remaining two-thirds of the workshop consist of a thorough presentation of the model curriculum and a lot of discussion. The curriculum is presented as an open set of ideas intended to spark further applications by the teachers, not as a closed package that can simply be run by the teacher without thought or imagination. Teachers learn how a combination of in-class slide presentations, in-class and at-home art assignments, field trips and discussions can enrich their students' understanding of basic humanities and social science concepts and data.

Exemplary materials are distributed periodically during the workshop. First there is a three-page list of "ideas for classroom activities" and a bibliography. Here one finds suggestions such as:

Have students show art and artifacts that reflect research on a particular theme (e.g., forms of government, sports, housing, places of worship, portraiture, etc.). Ask them

to add artwork of their own relevant to the theme;

(Or) Explore social structure in relation to spatial structure by turning the classroom into a circle, into a "courtroom," putting some students higher than others, putting some students higher than the teacher, etc. Have students discuss and write about their differing experiences in the differing spaces;

(Or) Have students make presentations on the arts of a country (or ethnic group) on which they are making a case study for social studies, or whose literature they are reading in English. Ask them to make an integrated presentation in which the art is related to the rest of what they know about the country or ethnic group.

Next there is a similar list broken down sequentially by grade-level. For example, in Kindergarten, students might tell a story using only pictures. In Fourth Grade, students could discuss the relationship between the *look* and *meaning* of a popular television show. In the Sixth Grade, students might explore women or an ethnic group in art and as artists and discuss the relationship between art images and social roles.

One assignment for each grade level was presented in the arcane and bizarre "lesson-plan format" required by the State of California to show that the program can be presented to principals and superintendents in required formats. The workshop was over-enrolled with local primary and secondary teachers each time it was offered.

CONCLUSION

Architecture and urban planning, the design professions and the fine arts are fundamental to the processes by which people bring the world of experience into being. No study of the humanities or of the social sciences can proceed adequately without a keen sense of the role of the cultural landscape in the construction of perception. At the college level, courses both in General Education and in the majors must begin to reflect this. This means that

scholars who can think both verbally and in other media (e.g., visually or kinaesthetically) must perform two tasks. They must disseminate the evidence, concepts and theories that give rise to this understanding, and they must create practical and effective resources to help teachers communicate it in the classroom.

The arts are also crucial in the contemporary transmission of political information and disinformation. An informed electorate requires a sophisticated understanding of what images mean. Education at all levels must work to generate widespread public visual literacy.

Although continued work is needed on the role of the humanities and social sciences in the education of artists, it is time we begin to focus on the role of architecture and urban planning, the design professions and fine arts in everyone's education. Projects like the Image Bank and the Integrated Curriculum Workshop can only be developed by artist/educators and by humanists and social scientists who work closely with them. It is time we rolled up our sleeves and got to work.

Notes

1. Although recent studies, such as the Getty Report (1985) and the NEH's *Toward Civilization* (1988), are useful, they are incomplete and inadequate; nor do they address education beyond Grade 12.

The Getty Report correctly recognizes the need for humanities and social science components in studio instruction. This gives rise to their now famous call for "discipline-based art education." It is a good notion, as far as it goes, but it is dangerously one-sided. The Getty Report fails to recognize the need for art education in the humanities and social sciences. Its authors have not balanced their program with a call for "art-based discipline education."

Toward Civilization is a more complex document that more nearly does justice to the issue. The authors of this report articulate four reasons why what they call "basic art education" is necessary: civilization, creativity, communication and choice. In the sections on communication and choice they come close to describing what I call the need for an educated citizenry in an iconic age. (The report is much more likely to frame the importance of arts education in economic terms, such as comparisons with the Japanese or discussions of market-impact, than in political terms, perhaps because it was sponsored by a Government agency.)

However, *Toward Civilization* takes no account of the role of the cultural landscape in the construction of perception, or of the differing processes of perceptual structuring embodied in "other civilizations" (to use the terminology of the report). Because the presentation of the importance of the arts is not complete, the prescription for art in education is likewise incomplete.

Toward Civilization calls for sequential education in the creation, production and performance of art linked to instruction in the history, critical theory and ideas of the arts (p. 13). In this, it resembles the Getty Report's "discipline-based education" with the salutary difference that it places clearer emphasis on studio production. What the NEH report lacks is any call to illuminate the generative role of the arts in the subjects studied by the humanities and social sciences. It does not call for humanities and social science teachers to introduce art as an active force in the fields which they study, nor does it encourage them to incorporate methods and materials into their classrooms. Like the Getty Report, *Toward Civilization* fails to balance the role of the disciplines in art education with an understanding of the role of art in disciplinary education. Ultimately this is a significant failing which, if uncorrected, will distort teaching and learning in both the fine arts and the disciplines.

I fully support the movement toward "writing across the curriculum," and I agree that writing should be done in studio classes. I would also like to see a movement toward "drawing across the curriculum," and I definitely believe drawing has a place in English, Philosophy and American History classes.

2. Of the two, the former is of more profound intellectual significance, although the latter is of immediate practical consequence. If humanists and social scientists integrated knowledge of the education of the senses into the conduct of their professions and their classrooms, our educational system would respond adequately to the challenge of iconic politics.

A third important reason for studying art in the humanities and social sciences, which I will only be able to briefly mention here, is the rooting of primal metaphors of our culture in the experience of the arts. For example, the best known creation story of the Judeo-Christian myth, God's molding of the human form from clay, is a potter's myth. Weaving and terms related to it provide root metaphors for wisdom in Plato's philosophy, a metaphor still evident in the English pun *text/textile*.

3. Habituated body rhythms, body postures and characteristic physical tensions are culturally learned, embedded in our bodies and lost from direct experience.

4. For additional readings on the education of the senses, see, for example, Bateson (1979), Eck (1981), Gibson (1969), Hall (1959, 1969, 1980), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Ornstein (1973), Ornstein and Naranjo (1971), Price-Williams (1969) and Tuan (1974).

5. See, for example, Jellicoe and Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man* (1987, pp. 138-201). They note, for example, that the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, designed by Vignola in 1566, "shows the same principles of composition" as Perugino's Christ giving the keys to St. Peter, painted in 1503.

In general there were two trends: one was the subjugation of ever increasing elements of the landscape or composition to planned design; the other was the establishment of fixed views. As the Renaissance gave way to the Baroque, "the fixed viewpoint remained but the eye was directed through illusion with such subtlety as to appear to be free: spectator, object (whether architecture or sculpture) and environment all appeared to be part of one scene" (p. 165).

6. For an interesting discussion on the development of distance and the view in the West, see Yi-Fu Tuan's *Topophilia* (1974, pp. 129-141).

7. American schools are beleaguered by a host of problems, from underfunding to non-English speaking refugees to local ignorance and bigotry. Nevertheless, on

the whole, they have (to date) done a remarkable, if imperfect, job of educating us as a citizenry. This is, of course, a different question than their effectiveness in job training, in promoting equality of opportunity or in fostering creativity.

8. This first became clear to me in the summer of 1987 at an NEH Summer Workshop on The Introductory Course in Religious Studies held in Berkeley and conducted by the Berkeley/Chicago/Harvard Consortium on the Academic Study of Religion.

9. The author is Director/Editor of the Image Bank project, which is administered out of the Office for Programs in Comparative Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. In addition to the Director/Editor and a research assistant, the project is served by an Advisory Board of scholars in world religions and in religion and the arts, including senior faculty from Harvard University, the University of Chicago, the University of California at Berkeley, Drew University, Barnard College and elsewhere.

10. Such questions may affect our understanding of art history. For example, the human image was rare in the arts of the East until its introduction in North India several centuries into the Common Era. The source of the introduction was Roman, the context Buddhist. The result was, first, the appearance of images of the Buddha; second, the eruption of images of gods/goddesses in emergent Hinduism; and third, the importation of sacred human images into China, via the transmission of Buddhism via the silk road. All well known; but the question remains, what was the impact on the construction of perception and the experience of the self generated by imagining divinity in terms of representations of the human body?

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