**Title of Project:** Adolescent Art Reflection

**City, State:** Scottsdale, Arizona

**Grant Period:** June 2010-June 2011

**NAEF Grant Amount:** $4253.00 (Research)

**Project Description:**
Our study describes the effects of Visions, a year-long, thematic, studio-centered, museum-based program for advanced art students offered by the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art (SMOCA) in Scottsdale, Arizona. During the 2010-11 academic year, 42 high school art students from six area high schools and their teachers participated in a series of 10 day-long sessions both at SMOCA and at other locations, which included gallery visits, artist talks, group discussions, visits to artists' studios, and studio workshops. Students from diverse socio-economic levels met in three studio groups: photography, sculpture, and drawing and painting. Each was charged to develop his or her own artwork focused on the theme of Identity. These works, together with students' artist statements, were exhibited in the Young at Art Gallery in the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts in the spring of 2011.

**Project Goals and Objectives:**
1. To test how well Erickson and Clover’s Viewpoints Theory of Art Understanding (a modification of Parsons’ Theory of Aesthetic Experience) explains changes in adolescents’ reflection on their own art after engagement with contemporary art and artists in a year-long, thematic, studio-centered, museum-based program. 
2. To identify emerging issues that could lead to a better understanding of how to engage adolescent artists with contemporary art in collaboration with their high school art teachers.

**Description of Activities Supported by this Grant. For Research Grantees, include a summary of research methodology.**
The NAEF grant supported our search for other adolescent programs offered by art museums as well as our visits to selected museums for interviews with museum educators responsible for those programs. The grant supported a graduate student to transcribe pre and post interviews with 12 students, observe museum sessions, and score some measures. The grant paid a statistician to consult with us on our quantitative findings and assist in determining the significance of differences between pre and post test scores. The grant also paid for the production of student journals/sketchbooks.

Ours was an exploratory experimental study that used mixed quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and compare pre and post data on participants’ art reflection at the outset of the Visions program and at its conclusion. Procedures for data gathering included:
- pre tests and post tests using two quantitative instruments (“Viewpoints on Art” and “Art Making Priorities”)
- pre and post written judgments of contemporary artworks chosen by students from a current exhibition
- pre and post interviews with 12 students about their art making processes
- qualitative analysis of students’ final artworks and artist statements
- analysis of characteristics of adolescent programs offered by 40 art museums as presented on their websites
- survey of art museum educators using NAEA museum education Listserv
- interviews with several museum educators responsible for adolescent art programs.

Photo caption (left) Photography student uses her camera during an artist's studio visit.
Contemporary artist Jean Shin talks with Visions students about her exhibition at SMoCA exhibition titled *Unlocking*.

**Results: Lessons Learned or Findings of Research**

After engagement in a year-long, thematic, studio-centered, museum-based program, many advanced high school students shifted the ideas upon which they based their art reflections from beauty, realism, and skill or the elements and principles of design to expression of feelings or ideas. Careful selection of and collaboration with both artists and high school art teachers is essential to maximize the effect of the museum-based program on students’ art reflection. Visits to artists’ studios can inspire adolescents’ reflection on their own art making. The program is most effective when teachers prepare students for museum visits and follow up after they return to their schools.

**Impact of Receiving this Grant:**

Discovering the effectiveness of the Visions program on increasing students’ attention to meaning provides valuable justification for continuing the SMoCA Visions program in challenging economic times. In 2011-12 and in ensuing years, Laura Hales, SMoCA’s associate director of museum education, is collaborating more closely with high school art teachers to enhance the success of the ever-evolving Visions program. She collects teachers’ feedback on the program and identifies ways teachers can support the program’s goals in their own classrooms. The customized Visions journal that she created for this study proved to be an effective way for students to properly focus and apply themselves to the goals of the program and will be used again in future years.

Our investigation of adolescent programming offered by various art museums revealed programs focused on a range of interests from studio learning, to understanding museums, to building community leadership, to entertainment, to building future audiences. Insights from these investigations helped inform SMoCA’s new “Teen Lounge” program.

**Grantee Biography:**

Mary Erickson earned a BFA from the University of Illinois and an MA and PhD from Ohio State University. She has taught at the high school, community college, and university levels. Her research centers on teaching art as inquiry and the development of art understanding. She is currently a professor at Arizona State University. Laura Hales earned a BFA and MA from Arizona State University. She has taught art and technology at the high school level and is currently the associate curator of education at Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art.

**About the National Art Education Foundation**

NAEF supports visual art educators and promotes the teaching of art through professional development, research, and program sponsorship. As an independent, philanthropic organization, NAEF assists with efforts to represent the teachers of art in America, improve the conditions of teaching art; promote the teaching of art; encourage research and experimentation in art education; sponsor institutes, conferences, and programs on art education; and to publish articles, reports, and surveys about art. The Foundation has supported 245 projects since its inception in 1985. NAEF funding supports a wide variety of professional activities, including research in art education, scholarships for professional development, promotion of art education as an integral part of the curriculum; establishment and/or improvement of art instruction in public and private K-16 schools; promotion of the teaching of art through activities related to the instructional process, curriculum, student learning, student assessment, classroom behavior, management, or discipline; purchase of art equipment and/or instructional resources. Donations in support of NAEF, a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization, are tax deductible and greatly appreciated.