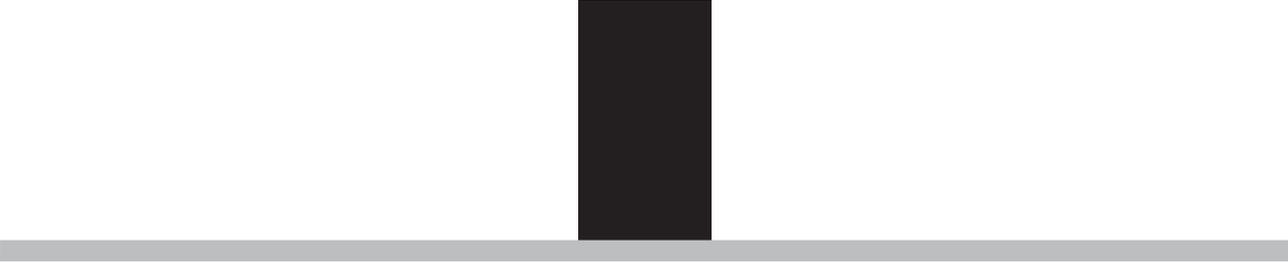

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Introduction

BERNARD YOUNG, EDITOR

When this book was first proposed and later published (1990) by NAEA, Tom Hatfield, the Executive Director at the time, said it was a groundbreaking book. Who could foresee then that Mac Arthur Goodwin would later become the first African American president of NAEA? And who could know that Barack Obama would be elected the 44th president of the United States, the first African American chief executive? Such a historical breakthrough would have seemed unthinkable just a few years ago.

This book takes a new look at art, culture, and ethnicity issues in art education. By no means is the book meant to be exhaustive on the subjects covered. The writers in this volume hope there will be some breakthroughs in the thinking of people who read this book. Hopefully, it will be an introduction and beginning for some readers and an inspiration to others already interested in the topics included in these pages. Most of the book has changed since its first publication; however, 4 chapters from the first edition are in the book and are still relevant and remain references that are useful to those interested in diverse issues in art and culture. The United States has gone through numerous transformations and there is some evidence that the interests of citizens have increased on cultural differences and global awareness since 1990.

Banks and Banks (2004, p. xi) state, “Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal education opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups.” Each year when I teach my course on multicultural issues in art education it amazes me that so few students are aware of these issues in art, of knowledge about artists from diverse cultures, and even of a consideration that ethnicity in

art is so pervasive in the United States and throughout the World. It also is a relief that interests in these areas of study are high among the students.

The intention of this book of readings is to present perspectives to future and current art teachers, artists, and others interested in understanding more about art, culture, and ethnicity. The examples in this book are uneven in the representation of diversity in art education but it should be expected that the changes in the artworld and our schools are continuous.

In the first chapter, “Mexico Next Right: Considering Representations of Mexico, Mexicans, and Chicanas/os in Visual Culture,” Elizabeth Garber contributes to the scholarship that weds visual culture education with ethnic/multicultural studies. She explains Chicana/o and Latina/o studies using interesting examples from visual and popular culture while adding new voices to the conversation.

“Multiculturalism and Art Education: An Africentric Perspective” is written by Samuel Adu-Poku, a scholar who explores the definition of Africentricity and what the literature states about this theoretical position, presenting both pro and con views by critics and supporters. How this concept unfolds in the African/African American communities, both within the continent and African diaspora, is explained and hopefully will generate further research in the art education community.

“Ancestry and Aristocracy: Indigenous Art of the Northwest Coast” is a chapter from the original book by Barbara Loeb. Loeb writes about the region that we now think of as the Northwest Coast extending along the Pacific Coast and the indigenous people who occupy and create in

that territory. She points out to the readers that the indigenous people of North America include culture areas that are so distinct that it is unreasonable to put their creative activities under in one category.

“Apprentice Mask: One Yaqui Pasocola and His Teachings” is a qualitative study of a Yaqui Pasocola in the Southwest, specifically in the community of Guadalupe in Arizona. In this chapter Sigrun Saemundsdottir studies the philosophy, history, religion, ceremonies, and art of the Yaqui people and examines artist Merced Maldonado and how his mentorship and artistic traditions can pass from one generation to the next. Keeping cultural traditions is important, as various culturally diverse groups fear the loss of their cultural traditions during the 21st century.

“Powwow: Teaching Indigenous Arts through the Heartbeat of the People” by Christine Ballengee Morris raises a common concern that teachers have or should have as they attempt to decide on how to make an object without teaching why the object is made or how and when it is used in an indigenous culture. Often teachers in my art class, in their attempt to include multicultural art, will misrepresent people and objects of the First Nations. This is a pedagogical dilemma that even the writer, a member of the Cherokee Nation, has struggled with. Morris focuses on how one cannot reduce 500-plus American Indian Nations to a general homogenized group. This chapter and the previous two will at least break the surface of understanding of the diversity of Native peoples.

In “Encountering Others,” Olivia Gude writes about artists/educators and their capacities to affect and interact with their communities. Often artists/educators are not understood or are not appreciated by their communities, and they leave to find new homes that will appreciate and understand them. The chapter is filled with personal experiences and an examination of how artistic investigation can guide communities and enlarge their understandings of themselves and others. Examining internal goals, desires, stresses, and hidden thoughts often will create new ideals. These explorations may assist in forming greater communities of hope and possibilities, as expressed by Gude.

In “Art Education and the Community Act: An Inquiry into the Interior of the Process,” Vesta A. H. Daniel and Deborah L. Drew report the results of using heuristic inquiry/self study to develop a personal understanding of the community-based art (CBA) experience designated as the community act. The secondary intent of the chapter is to describe that understanding so that it can be applied to the development and improvement of community-based art education (CBAE). The inquiries here are Daniel’s intimate and autobiographical attachment to a series of CBAE projects over a period of 13 years. This chapter further encourages teachers and their students to interact in their communities to elevate the levels of learning, problem-solving, and improved pedagogy.

“Afro-American Culture and the White Ghetto,” Eugene Grigsby, Jr.’s chapter, is from the original edition of this text. One of the pioneers in the field of art education dealing with issues of multicultural art and education, Grigsby reminds us that, “African American culture emanates primarily from Africa but, in the course of its travel, has picked up facets from the Caribbean, South America, the American Indians, and even from the Europeans who overran the African continent. The continent of Africa is rich in many cultures.” The chapter primarily centers on African American culture but includes other cultures that are outside the understanding of Whites who have concluded the only important knowledge is Eurocentric. Once cultural knowledge has been expanded, the author states, the walls of the “White Ghetto” will tumble.

In “Metamorphosis: Embracing the Changeable Nature of Cultural Understanding in Art Education,” Pamela G. Taylor deals with the metamorphosis of art education, especially art education dealing with cultural issues. She addresses the question of who really can speak for others—how do we sensitively, patiently, and respectfully approach and teach a culture other than our own in art education? The questions raised here and the proposals to transformative knowledge are certainly relevant to future art teachers and others who will address the issues in a rapidly changing society—one in which school-age children are leading the demographic changes.

“Linking the Legacy: Approaches to the Teaching of African and American Art” by Paulette Spruill-Fleming is a still-relevant chapter from the original text. It was ahead of its time when it was first written. Spruill-Fleming links legacies, addresses global education, and discusses a model for global multicultural art education and problems in the continuous changes in such curricular materials.

“Teaching Art in a Multicultural/Multi-Ethnic Society” by Carmen Armstrong is a chapter from the original text. It addresses numerous opportunities to incorporate the qualities of all the cultural and ethnic groups in our society and how the creation of this totality will create a vibrant and harmonious patch quilt that will enrich the art education community.

In “Prioritizing Multiculturalism in Art Education,” Bernard Young addresses how art educators plan to prioritize multicultural art education in the United States while the pressures for accountability through high stakes testing has become a major issue of reform in our schools. As the reframing of educational issues is addressed across the nation, the author suggests that these opportunities in multicultural art education can create new situations for teachers to encourage their students to participate in constructing a new curriculum.

“Children’s Drawings: A Comparison of Two Cultures,” W. Lambert Brittain’s chapter, addresses issues through children’s drawings from two cultures. This is an area of study that seems to be avoided by contemporary art educators, while some years ago the study of children’s drawings was at

the center of the field of art education. Because children still draw as a means of expression, this chapter offers not only a perspective that is important but also a discussion on cultural patterns, differences, and what these drawings can offer to explain two diverse populations.

“Confronting and Confusing Images: Resisting Visual Representations of Racial and Cultural Stereotypes in and through Digitally Mediated Visual Culture” by B. Stephen Carpenter, II, posits that visual culture as a philosophical position has been given a great deal of attention in art education over the past few years and it certainly is not a new concept in education or art history. Visual culture can be found in almost every aspect of our society, Carpenter points out that forms are found in amusement parks, shopping malls, advertisements, film, video, and television and it should not come as a surprise that racial and cultural stereotypes are digitally mediated in visual culture. The author offers a brief discussion of how teachers and students might challenge and resist confrontational and confusing representation of racial and cultural stereotypes.

In “The Valuation of Art Instruction in Urban America,” Allan L. Edmunds writes from a pragmatic perspective as an art teacher in an under-performing, under-funded school district in a predominantly urban area. The chapter looks at the plight of ethnic minorities, the possibilities of problems in rural areas, and how our nation will build a competitive global workforce while not attending to children from urban American schools. Even with an economy in crisis, the value of art in urban schools has proven in the past that it has educational benefits for urban youth.

In “Understanding African Heritage in a Transnational Perspective: An Experience in Brazil,” Flávia M. C. Bastos states that the goal of her chapter is to explore alternative, perhaps more integrated and comprehensive, ways to teach about African and African American art and heritage. This is especially important with the forecast that minority students will become the majority in public schools in the 21st century. The chapter covers heritages and examples from Africa and Brazil.

In “Seeing the Other through our Own Eyes: Problems with Multicultural Art Education,” Jacqueline Chanda, along with several other authors, discusses the perspective of “the Other.” In developing a multicultural pedagogy, it is essential that the developer recognize and understand “the Other” on a philosophical and cultural level. The chapter shows that

there are problems with some current practices in multicultural art education. Often “the Other” is not understood, or even included in the conceptualization of the objectives being written about “the Other.” Misrepresentation can be alleviated with a more comprehensive approach to researching a culture and including those from the culture.

“Building Community in Harlem through Intergenerational Art Education,” Angela M. La Porte’s chapter, is from a larger ethnographic study of how education and social implications emerged during a 7-month intergenerational art program in New York City’s Harlem. Latino and African American teenagers collected oral histories from homebound older adults of similar or the same ethnic backgrounds during interviews and discussions about culturally and historically relevant artwork. The artmaking and oral history shared among the intergenerational groups nurtured and fostered a sense of community and learning.

“African American Self-Taught Artists from South Carolina: Catalyst for Identifying Community Connections and Teaching and Learning in the Art Room,” Minuette B. Floyd’s chapter, identifies the connections of self-taught artists from South Carolina and how these lessons can potentially enhance the local art curriculum for children.

In “International Field Experience in the Development of Global Competency and Ethnic Identity,” Mariama Ross writes about international field experiences as an exceptional opportunity for students to experience themselves and others outside of their home environments. She argues that these experiences will further global competencies and the development of ethnic identities of university students. Ross speaks of her own experiences and self-evaluations and growth as a researcher, resident and professor in Ghana.

In the chapter on “Understanding the Muslim Reluctance toward Figural Art,” Ismail Ozgur Soganci studies, in the global context, practical and comprehensive resources of the common Muslim stance on figurative visual arts, with an emphasis on the human form. This interdisciplinary approach to analyzing the origins of the traditional Muslim reluctance toward mimetic representation, more widely known as “figurative representation” ban, in Islam should give art educators a better understanding of this specific topic in Muslim culture from an insider’s perspective. It is hoped that this interdisciplinary study will encourage art educators to look beyond their cultures to better understand borders outside their own.

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