

# Development and Learning in Art: Moving in the Direction of a Holistic Paradigm for Art Education

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## Abstract

This article chronicles the evolution of holistic approaches and thinking in the context of teacher preparation and development in a professional school of art. A Study Group for Holistic Approaches in Art Education was formed in 2001 to explore ways holistic theory and practice could be realized within the context of K-12 art education. Reports from members of the study group describe various efforts to create safe communities for learning, offer examples of developmental and contextual source material that gave purpose to artmaking, and discuss specific strategies for deepening engagement. Set into context with current research on development and learning in art in the field of art education, the work of this study group suggests ways holistic theory and practice advance the field's discourse. In particular, holistic theory and practice in art education point to a concept of development in art and clarify the particular value of art as a medium for transformational learning. The article concludes with some thoughts on how others can enter the dialogue on holistic theory and practice in art education.

One intern, not yet a student teacher, wanted to provide middle school students with a holistic approach to an interdisciplinary unit. He began with discussion of a text in which resolution of a conflict led to dialogue. Reflection on unresolved conflicts in their lives was invited through self-reflective questions. Students then learned, from a recitation of key words from their collective writings, that all experienced the discomfort of unresolved conflicts. An opening for a more soulful communal dialogue came with one student's question about the meaning of love. Moving to an all-purpose room where they could sit in a circle, students shared their interpretations. They

then turned to art as a medium for communicating their own personal stories. This process was informed by artist exemplars, decisions the intern himself considered in making such a work of his own, and the possibilities of collage as a medium. Thus the stage was set for personally meaningful work in which heart, mind, and hand all worked together. His accounting of this teaching experience was grounded in theory drawn from Bruner and Steiner (Bieneniek, 2004). Later, as a student teacher, he cut through the knot of dysfunction in an urban high school Art I class by cracking open an honest conversation about fear and the real person who lives beneath one's behaviors. He was not talking at students; rather, he was speaking with them at a level that was both personal and from the soul. The tenor of the art class transformed and the work became artful, serious, funded with personal narrative.

An alumnus begins his career in teaching asking how a technical course such as Introduction to Photography can be, from the beginning, a holistic experience. Five years later, with two Presidential Scholars coming out of his photo program, he has forged his own approach to teaching developmentally with existential questions (Castro, 2004). An alumna leads her department to develop a framework for holistic practice that will guide instruction for their total art program (McKenna, 2006). Yet another, now pursuing doctoral work, takes a holistic approach to an art methods course with elementary classroom majors. The quality of her teaching earns her an award of distinction from the university department.

In our art education program, the conver-

sation about teaching holistically continues to evolve. Faculty model holistic approaches in their teaching, search for literature to add depth and dimension to the dialogue, rethink the basics of instructional planning to accommodate intuition and spontaneity in teaching. As learner-centered practice converges with teaching in the domain of art, we find ourselves fully engaged with the act of teaching, connected deeply to students, in a state of renewal. How did we arrive at this place?

### ***Moving in the Direction of Holistic Theory and Practice***

For more than a decade, we at the Maryland Institute College of Art have been curious to know more about holistic theory and practice. It seemed to resonate with a philosophy we would describe as learner centered, domain specific, and context sensitive. We value depth as well as breadth in studio practice. We consider knowledge of historical, cultural, and contemporary traditions in art essential. We see art education as responsive to students' need to make sense out of experience that arises from the context of their own lives, within the school curriculum, and in the culture at large. The particular feature of holistic practice that sets it apart from other approaches is the manner in which it seeks to bring into alignment body, mind, and spirit (London, 2004a). Having attended one of Peter London's workshops, we invited him to conduct one with students and alumni. As interest developed, we were able to secure funding for a yearlong residency in 2001-02 during which he made presentations in different courses, engaged faculty in dialogue, and formally initiated the Study Group for Holistic Art Education.

The study group, in which I participated, became a learning community with a central question: How might holistic approaches be realized within K-12 practice? Dr. London provided philosophical and theoretical grounding as group members began to envision ways to make their teaching more holistic. He conducted vis-

its to schools in order to understand the context in which members were teaching and to observe holistic approaches in action. The study group met monthly to examine samples of student work, share strategies, and engage in an extended dialogue. Reports of these preliminary investigations, developed over the course of 2 years, contain rich descriptive data in the form of observer-participant accounts and commentary from London, who worked independently with individual members as well as with the group as a whole. A monograph from the study group, *Toward a Holistic Paradigm in Art Education*, contains an introduction to holistic theory, examples of holistic approaches piloted in public and private schools, a college art course for freshmen, art education courses, and a community art program, and London's reflective commentary (London et al., 2004).

In this paper, I will draw upon those reports and the dialogue that continues. On one level, I am interested in how alignment of body, mind, and spirit deepen engagement and learning in the context of everyday art instruction. To that end, a distillation of approaches and findings that emerged from the study group will be offered. On another level, I am interested in how holistic theory and practice resonate with, and possibly advance, discourse in art education. The paper includes a proposal for reconceptualizing development and learning in art informed by holistic theory and practice. It concludes with some thoughts on how the discourse in art education is advanced by moving toward a holistic paradigm.

### **Investigations of the Study Group**

The Study Group for Holistic Approaches in Art Education included art educators from elementary, middle, and high schools as well as college faculty and a community art program director, each investigating a particular question within a specific context. Pugliese Castro (2004) wanted to know how elementary students would respond to an art encounter London had or-

chestrated with adults. Ruopp (2004) wanted to see what an expanded exploration of ideas and materials, within the context of a journal sustained over time, would accomplish holistically with middle schoolers. Wittner (2004) was curious to know how middle schoolers' need to "seek protection" from something they felt threatening would give purpose and meaning to a unit in clay. McKenna was interested in exploring two different questions: one asking how a typical high school formal art exercise might be transformed into a more holistic encounter (2004a), and the other how a greater sense of community could be developed in her advanced art class (2004b). Castro (2004) took on the challenge of transforming technique and media-based courses in photography into a program shaped by holistic experiences. La Perriere (2004) wanted to examine the juxtaposition of formal design exercises with holistic personal, open-ended metaphoric assignments in an art college foundation course. Carroll (2004) was interested in how modeling holistic approaches with students in teacher preparation and professional development programs would help them construct holistic theory from practice. Reynolds (2004) looked at the challenge of incorporating holistic practices, from an administrator's point of view, within the context of a community-based art program.

What did they report? Almost immediately all saw positive results from incorporating a single holistic approach. Over time, they found ways of creating safe communities for learning, discovered developmental and contextual sources for purposeful engagement, and developed holistic approaches to deepen engagement that resulted in quality artwork and transformative learning.

### ***Creating Safe Communities for Learning***

All reports affirm the importance of creating a safe learning environment in which students can take risks, share personal stories, reach out to each other, and engage

in a constructive dialogue about art. For most students, the culture of the schoolhouse is recognizably unsafe, threatening, intimidating, critical, and oppressive. Certain strategies appeared to build trust with and among students. Teachers did more than assure students that risk-taking was desirable; they took risks themselves. For example, one made herself the subject of an "ask-anything-you-want-to-know" interview with advanced students to model a process for peer interaction as a step in building community (McKenna, 2004a). Others guided class activities, worked alongside students, or shared their own work. All were fully present as companions in the process of discovery and learning. They set parameters for shared dialogue and critique that gave students more control over desired forms of feedback and emphasized the positive and constructive purposes of dialogue stimulated by art. They paid attention to individual learners' personal preferences for feedback and communication and sought multiple ways to give encouragement and affirmation. They were observant of class dynamics and creative in inventing ways to stimulate self-reflection, sharing, and dialogue.

One could certainly inventory strategies that contributed to noncompetitive and non-comparative learning environments. "You are not here to prove yourself. You are here to *improve* yourself," says Mary Wolf (2004, p. 38). Yet, something more subtle seemed to be at work in creating a sense of safety and community. London (2003) would say it has something to do with establishment of an "I-Thou" relationship between teacher and student. In such a relationship, regard for students is made clear through direct attention paid to each individual as one having something worthy and important to say with someone sincerely interested in listening. Appropriate eye contact, listening skills, asking the right questions, just being there without judgment, seemed to contribute to the development of this "I-Thou" relationship.

One could further ask: What are the qualities of teachers whom students find

trustworthy? Might it have to do with a teacher's own sense of spirituality, centeredness, self-knowledge, wisdom, or capacity to turn one's attention fully to the needs of others? Are such qualities the product of one's personal history, time, experience, and/or sense of connectedness to others? Can they be learned or developed? To what degree does intuition play a role? While these questions were raised and discussed in the study group, it appears that we have much more to learn from, and about, teachers who transform a climate of fear and rejection into one that builds confidence, inspires trust, empowers individuals, and creates community.

### ***Developmental and Contextual Sources for Purposeful Engagement with Art***

Given their personal engagement with art, members of the study group valued artmaking as a purposeful endeavor. Further, they recognized that students do not invest in art unless a personal connection was made. In order to find source material for purposeful engagement, they looked to their learner's needs. In some cases, they found cognitive, emotional, or social needs of that begged for attention. Some were clearly ready for new learning in the domain of art, especially in regard to the development of artistic behaviors, skills and knowledge, and ways of thinking. In addition, valid source material arose out of the contexts of the learning community and connections with the larger school curriculum. In essence, they found plenty of ready material for purposeful artmaking and noted developmental issues they could embrace or would need to address. Their search for meaningful sources was holistic in the sense that it was fundamentally learner centered while, at the same time, domain specific and context sensitive.

Emotional issues provided ample source material in several studies including middle school students' fears and concerns (Wittner, 2004), a need for a more positive sense of self (Wolf, 2004), and a need to

center themselves away from home for the first time (La Perriere, 2004). In one study children used visual analogy as a cognitive strategy to find connections between themselves, nature, and an environmental project (Pugliese Castro, 2004). In another, art education students responded to existential questions to gain familiarity with the role of metaphor in holistic practice (Carroll, 2004). In another study, the need for a more cohesive community in advanced art inspired a process to transform peer-strangers into peer-friends (McKenna, 2004a).

In considering students' development in art, teachers' own expertise in art played a crucial role. With confidence in "an unseen process where one skill and experience becomes the foundation for the next" (Ruopp, 2004, p. 23) and an awareness of how limited experience with materials and ideas constricts choice, Ruopp set her middle schoolers on a path of exploration and discovery. In assessing the artistic ability of "troubled youth," Wolf (2004) recognized a correlation between low drawing skills and very negative attitudes about art; entrenched in such negativity, she realized she would need to build confidence with art materials and representational skills in order to transform their view of themselves and art. Castro's (2004) framework for existential questions was clearly developmental, as was his sequential program for learning increasingly complex processes of photography. The combination was designed to lead to more mature artistic behaviors, greater command of the medium, and ownership of the creative process.

As students found purpose in their engagement with art, these art teachers discovered important insights about individual learners and groups as a whole. As one example, Wittner gained insight into the social and emotional concerns that plagued her middle school students, an assortment of somewhat humorous and serious issues. She saw them gain power over these concerns through the act of making clay gargoyles as "protectors." A new measure of personal confidence emerged

through the process of making the work and in students' reflective writing. In similar ways, Wolf's (2004) students, sent as they were to an alternative school with incoherent personal narratives and little in terms of artistic skill, discovered positive influences in their lives while increasing their confidence and ability to represent ideas through materials. La Perriere's (2004) freshman embraced the opportunity to center themselves by creating personal, aesthetic portable sanctuaries which, in turn, helped her understand each individual more holistically.

Thus, it appears that developmentally appropriate and contextually significant sources for artmaking set in motion a reciprocal process. By honoring the social and emotional lives of learners, members of the study group were able to tune into deeper sources for art making that, in turn, resulted in discoveries that reinforced the notion that artmaking has purpose and value. In the process, students became better known to their teachers and to one other, making possible a greater sense of community. This news was significant for teachers and empowering for students.

Is there a way of thinking about such a search for source material that might guide curriculum development, over the course of a given school year or years of instruction? To what degree should an art curriculum be concerned with issues of self-identity, the construction of coherent personal narratives, integration of parts of the self, and working through personal conflicts or challenges? To make art a viable medium for transformative learning, how much of the curriculum should be concerned with domain-specific learning and what should that consist of? To what degree should the art curriculum move beyond issues of the self to relationships with others and issues arising out of the larger curriculum and the world of experience? The reports of the study group reveal something about the manner in which holistic theory helped teachers find source material for meaningful engagement with art. Yet there is much more to think about here as we consider

how to create a developmentally balanced curriculum that causes both inner growth and expanded horizons.

### ***Deepening Engagement with Art***

Because all members of the study group were practicing artists, they placed a high level of trust in the artistic process and were able to draw on their broad and deep expertise in art. Interested in setting the stage for more challenging and self-reflective student engagement than usually offered, Castro (2004) observed: "Often we don't give our students enough credit for the depth of thought that they are capable of or their ability to voice it with maturity and grace" (p. 53).

To deepen engagement through the alignment of body, mind, and spirit, members experimented with a variety of approaches. These included: inviting analogical and metaphorical thinking (Pugliese Castro, 2004; Wittner, 2004; La Perriere, 2004); extending materials investigation shaped by ideas or themes broad enough to go in different directions yet sufficient to maintain integrity as a personal idea (Ruopp, 2004); using imaginative situations to unearth personal qualities as a sources for meaning in non-objective explorations (McKenna, 2004b); using interviews to discover a new friend and gather ideas for an homage (McKenna, 2004a); posing existential questions that sufficiently disrupt thinking to make introspection an essential step in the artmaking process (Castro, 2004; Carroll, 2004); and employing alternative forms of dialogue in response to student artwork (Castro, 2004). Offering students choice figured prominently in these methods as well. Pugliese Castro (2004) noted that given a choice, students selected materials "in keeping with their character" (p. 18). Ruopp's (2004) extended investigation of materials was initiated explicitly to develop confidence with materials and a repertoire of ideas for choice making. Castro's (2004) sequential framework for existential questions left plenty of

room for students to transition to their own questions whenever they were ready.

Certain discoveries stand out. One is the manner in which children's capacity for analogical thinking appears to grow more sophisticated over time, preparing them to use metaphorical thinking in art as they mature through the grades. At the other end of the educational spectrum, college students do not necessarily understand analogical and metaphorical thinking at a theoretical level, even though they may use it in their work.

A second discovery is how effectively existential questions unsettle or disrupt everyday thinking, engage self-reflection, and unearth authentic and personal responses. These are important questions, self-reflective with a *what if* quality and a built-in sense of urgency. Thus they engage imagination, intuition, and feeling, deepen engagement, and set respondents on a path to answers they did not know they had. For example, Castro's question: "How do you see the world?" asked more of students than *what* they saw. In asking *how*, students were led to self-reflection that, in turn, inspired unique and thoughtful visual responses. Castro (2004) made this observation:

A holistic approach invites students to risk looking inside themselves in ways they haven't usually been asked to before. Such an approach is also risky for the teacher in that results are oftentimes unpredictable and unknown. Yet, risk taking is characteristic of creative artists. Having an existential question to drive the making of the art, a question that comes in contact with all that is important to students, causes them to find their own voice and to speak eloquently. (p. 56)

A third discovery is the manner in which personal narratives unfolded in response to holistic approaches and, in the telling, became coherent. For a discussion of narrative structures found in these studies, see Sharon Johnson (2006).

Regarding experimentation, one member noted "how an extended process, exploring choices with material, image, and

mark can energize a community of learners and lead to personal insights" (Ruopp, 2004, p. 23). Student reflections indicated "a new sense of freedom and exploration with use of media, self-confidence, and pride in the imagery they created, true ownership for the process, and respect for the differences in each other" (p. 26).

The quality of artwork produced in response to holistic approaches appeared to be very strong, in one case twice verified by national recognition at the highest level. It might also be argued that some learners would have remained entirely resistant to artmaking had holistic considerations and approaches not been used. With the group's expertise in art, tasks given to learners were neither too hard nor too easy, offering the right level of challenge and appropriate opportunities to engage with sensuous materials, interesting processes, open-ended problems, and important questions. An idea expressed somewhat differently by Dissanayake (1988, 2000) and London (2004a) seemed to gain credence: When something of importance is uttered forth to someone deemed important, the effort to utter that full and clear will craft that expression to the level of the artistic.

How then might development and learning in art be evaluated? Certain criteria arise out of this study. For example, one might look for evidence of more mature artistic behaviors, greater command of the medium, and ownership of the creative process (London, 2004b). Such criteria, although contextual, are domain specific and qualitative. If one wants to look to the purposes served by deep engagement with art, another set of criteria emerges. One might look for evidence of more coherent narratives about the self and the world of experience. Evidence of integration might be visible in metaphorical connections made among ideas and concepts within a domain or among disciplines, between the past and the present, or between immediate personal experience and larger contexts of culture and humanity. Integration may also be thought of as internal to the self and also interpersonally as in one's

relationships with others, especially those different from the self; the form of the work may reflect its own level of integration, integrity, and coherence. As well, one might find increasing capacity for complexity evidenced in creative, critical, and imaginative qualities of the work itself as well as in its developmental process and reflective commentary.

Is it possible that such criteria call to mind and bring into alignment several qualitative characteristics noted in the literature that informs art education? To name only a few sources, we have notions about what qualifies as narrative (Bruner, 1990), mindful engagement (Eisner, 2002), interdisciplinary integration (Parsons, 2004), imaginative and metaphorical thinking (Efland, 2004), social construction of meaning (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978; Freeman & Stuhr, 2004), and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). How then is development and learning conceptualized in the literature of art education and holistic education?

### **Moving in the Direction of a Holistic Paradigm for Art Education**

#### ***Development and Learning in Art Education***

Artistic development and learning have returned to the table of contemporary discourse in art education. Burton's 1980s series on "Developing Minds" rendered development in art as a very complex proposition proceeding over the course of child and adolescent years. Kindler's 1997 anthology provided an update on contemporary thinking about development; it affirmed the fascinating nature of the topic and characterized development in art as more complex than previously thought.

#### ***Manifestations of Development and Learning***

Kindler's 2004 review considers several models that attempt to account for development in art. She notes that artis-

tic development is not "a self-contained category encompassing a unique set of cognitive processes that develop in a systematic, organized manner along one or even more dimensions" (2004a, p. 248). Instead, Kindler reframes studies in artistic development as "segments of knowledge relevant to the domain rather than defining a universal set of processes necessary and sufficient for artistic progression" (2004b, p. 228). Unsure of what actually constitutes artistic development, Kindler prefers to speak about development in art.

From this perspective, the field can be seen as building theory and practice along tangential lines including the development of repertoires for graphic representation, representation in the third dimension, and aesthetic response. New lines of investigation seem promising as well. One such example would be Soep's (2004) inquiry into egocentric speech as it sets the stage for inner speech, self-assessment, and artistic judgment. Kindler (2004b) recognizes the value of developmental research. It reveals important insights that inform practice, helps identify zones of proximal development and ways to scaffold learning, and offers useful strategies and models for sequencing instruction. Yet, much of this conversation is disconnected from the dynamics of relationships in teaching and learning, and, significantly, from the learner's intention or purpose.

#### ***Presence of Dynamic Relationships***

Matthews (2004), in his discussion of art in infancy, is critical of both old and new theories that assume development is "a moving away from 'here and now actions' in a sensorially rich, perceptual world toward an evermore disembodied, abstract, formal, and *therefore superior* mode of thinking" (p. 282). He sees a far different model of development in expression and representation evolving, one that seeks to identify the modes of representation employed by children as consequences of children's own intentions, motiva-

tions, and priorities. He believes there is a “dialectical relationship among the thinking child, the representational or expressive intention, the unfolding possibilities afforded by the medium, and the interpersonal environment” (p. 287). Other scholars have examined features of this dialectical relationship. For example, Burton (1997, 1998) and a study group investigated the nature of classroom conversations; Hafeli (2000) has explored negotiation in relationship to learners’ intentions; and Lewis (2005) has examined the manner in which both media and intention mediate representation.

### ***Restructuring the Discourse***

Searching for a way to restructure the discourse about artistic development, Kindler (2004b) suggests a systems approach and confluence theory, as applied in the field of creativity, as a sufficiently elastic if somewhat imprecise model for rethinking matters of development in art; she references Csikzentmihalyi’s (1996) model that highlights interaction between an individual, a domain, and a field. Kindler (2004) is a step away from a three-part model for interaction between a learner, the domain of art, and the interpersonal environment of the learning community. Matthews (2004) and others include learners’ intentions and the unfolding possibilities afforded by the medium. Golomb (1992) would add the unfolding possibilities of representation as part of this dynamic relationship.

In sum, we appear to have increasingly better ways to think about certain manifestations of development in art as well as increasingly sophisticated ways for thinking about the dynamic relationships associated with development and learning. Yet this still leaves open the question of what constitutes development and learning in art, a question of some importance in thinking about the field’s identity, mission, and issues of accountability. Why do development and learning in art matter?

### ***Development and Learning in Holistic Education***

Recent literature characterizes a pedagogy of wholeness as one that awakens self, soul, and spirit (Miller et al., 2005). Holistic theory conceptualizes development and learning in particular ways.

### ***Development and learning.***

Miller (2005) suggests development can be thought of as movement in the direction of transdisciplinary thinking, integration of knowledge, and complexity. Profound changes in awareness constitute learning. O’Sullivan’s (2005) definition is expansive:

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understand of relationships of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 76)

### ***Expressive arts as a medium for transformation.***

The expressive arts are a transformational medium in the sense that they integrate intellect and emotion, thought and feeling, action and response, mind and body, heart and hand. Narratives become more coherent and complexity is invited as aesthetic and expressive form is given to ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Creative processes that invite exploration and discovery, divergent and convergent thinking, shaping and making, imagination and metaphor, sharing and reflection, offer possibilities for disruption, disorganization, and reorganization of thought and feeling. In short, holistic practice needs the arts to realize

its goals of development and transformational learning.

### ***Engagement with Art as a Medium for Human Development***

Holistic theory brings human development and development in art into a dynamic relationship. Here, human development can be thought of in terms of the evolution of humankind and the significant role artistic behaviors play in shaping culture, community, and individuality. More than self-expression, art is conceived as a medium through which individuals and communities achieve a greater sense of integration, coherence, and complexity. As such, we have a more purposeful rendering of behaviors, attitudes, skills, and knowledge in the domain of art.

How then might development in art, transformational learning through art, and the deep purposes of art be characterized? The following proposals are offered:

Development in art can be conceptualized as movement toward more mature artistic behaviors, greater command of art as a medium for representation, higher levels of complexity and meaning in the work, and personal ownership of the creative process.

These open-ended qualifiers are consistent with work in the domain, suggest criteria for assessing development, and can be applied at all levels of instruction.

Learning in art can then be conceptualized as transformational change in which existing conceptions of self, community, art, and/or the world of experience are unsettled or disrupted, disorganized, and reorganized to reflect greater integration, coherence, and complexity.

Importantly, art has particular value as a unique medium for transformation.

Art can be said to offer pleasurable engagement with sensuous materials, compelling forms, complex and interesting processes and techniques, evolving representational systems, and opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving.

Creative processes spark inventive and imaginative visual-spatial-temporal thinking. Access to the domain of art reveals a rich treasure trove of models, concepts, and ideas evolved from long traditions of meaning making that continue to expand with humankind's quest for greater integration, coherence, and complexity.

### **Holistic Theory and Practice in Art Education**

What are the possibilities that holistic theory and practice can advance the discourse in art education? As the field shifts its attention to more purposeful engagement, it approaches the intersection of learner-centered, content-based, and issues-based instruction. I propose that holistic theory has the potential to bring divergent ideas and complex notions into greater alignment and doing so helps the field clarify its identity and sense of mission while accommodating its drive for complexity.

### ***Clarifying the Field's Mission as Purposeful Engagement with Art***

In that holistic practice seeks alignment of body, mind, and spirit interacting with an expressive medium, development in art is intrinsically wedded to purposeful engagement. It allows the field to move beyond debates over child art and school art towards processes of making and responding that are learner-centered and holistic. As well, a learner-centered approach no longer needs to conflict with subject-centered or social issues-centered approaches. Certainly, the construction of self-identity is an essential concern that can give life-long purpose to making art and learning about art. In holistic practice, the self exists in relationship with others, indeed the universe. Holistic practice thrives in community and accommodates investigation of important, real-life questions and issues. Furthermore, the use of existential questions, in that they are self-reflective, brings any topic back the learner. In asking, for example, "What is this to me (or to us)?" an issue, idea, or theme becomes learner-centered.

In trusting that a personal response is invited, indeed welcomed, the learner can then proceed to make work that is authentic, aesthetically realized, and potentially transformational.

### ***Clarifying What Constitutes Development and Learning in Art***

The proposed conception of development in art is one for which art educators can reasonably accept responsibility. Teacher and students can recognize the maturation of artistic and creative behaviors as demonstrated within the context of particular art problems, courses, programs, or years of education. Judgments about development would need to be referenced to zones of proximal development for particular individuals and/or groups of learners. Evidence of greater command of art knowledge and skills with media and modes of representation can be assessed; here, familiarity with developmental sequences related to various trajectories of knowledge and skill in the domain will play a significant role. Increasing ownership of the artistic process will be evident in the process of engagement and the work that results. All this makes large scale standards-based assessment problematic. Yet, the field already owns sophisticated models for assessment which can be further refined as needed (Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2004; Boughton, 2004).

### ***Clarifying the Particular Value of Art as a Medium for Transformational Learning***

In that expressive forms are the transformational media through which deep learning and integration occur, holistic theory embraces the full breadth and depth of the domain of art with its expansive and ever-expanding repertoire of representational possibilities, expressive media and forms, and ways of knowing and thinking. It anticipates development in art and reinforces the deep purposes of making art. It gives cause to a learner-centered, domain-spe-

cific, and context-sensitive approach. Making and responding to art are understood as processes for inquiry. Finding meaning through interpretation and reflection plays an essential role in bringing about integration, coherence, and complexity.

### ***Declaring Equitable Access to Art Education an Act of Social Justice***

Here, art education is advanced by the manner in which holistic theory supports the notion of making available expressive media for the purposes of transformational learning. In this democratization of art we have a more sophisticated notion than every-child-an-artist. Here all students have the opportunity to develop artistic behaviors, skills, and knowledge for the purpose of exploring personally and socially relevant questions, finding personal voice, making connections, and creating community. Those that find the visual arts of particular value in the process of their transformation are afforded opportunities for increasingly advanced study and engagement. As Burton as observed, providing such access to art constitutes its own act of social justice.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Where Are We Going?***

The integration of holistic approaches into our programs for art teacher preparation and professional development has renewed and revitalized our teaching and made it joyful. Holistic approaches have helped us build a strong sense of community. The artist-in-the-teacher has found affirmation and renewal. We have witnessed holistic growth on the part of our students who are now able to implement to holistic approaches with those in their charge. Our graduates are learner centered, knowledgeable about the domain of art itself and familiar with processes for development in art; they are alert to issues and opportunities for learning specific to the context in which they are teaching and own a range of strategies for purposefully and deeply

engaging learners with art. At this juncture, I see us as:

1. Incorporating holistic approaches in art education.

The study group began the work of developing K-12 approaches to art education based on holistic theory; others have been drawn into the effort and the work continues to evolve. We hope to continue this work and to inspire others to join in the effort.

2. Thinking holistically about learners, asking what the domain of art can bring to their questions, concerns, and quest for integration, coherent narratives, and complexity.

Holistic theory encourages us to tune into the lives of learners, use intuition in teaching, anticipate pressing questions and concerns, and pay attention to developmental and contextual factors that point to opportunities for purposeful engagement. The domain of art is viewed expansively and inclusively. Artistic behaviors belong to all cultures and times; they are common to all humankind yet realized with resourcefulness and imagination in the context of time and place, need and possibility. Strategies for making art, repertoires for representation, and modes of thought and expression continue to evolve and, as such, offer contemporary models for dealing with issues that impact students' lives.

3. Moving toward a holistic paradigm for art education.

A holistic paradigm invites us to envision human development as the foremost goal of art education. Development and learning in art become the medium for transformational change. Pedagogy deepens engagement. As partners in learning, teachers and students can fall into the mystery of making sense of who they are, where they came from, why they are here, where they might go, and what purposes they might find in life.

### ***An Invitation to Join the Conversation***

The work of this study group is just the first step in exploring holistic approaches to art

education. To join the conversation, teachers can ask: How can I bring mind, body and spirit of my students into alignment so that engagement with art becomes self-reflective and draws more deeply on emotion and intuition, memory and imagination, creative thinking and problem-solving? How can I create conditions in my learning community that will make it safe for risk-taking and more soulful dialogue? What developmental and contextual factors point to sources for purposeful artmaking? What expertise can I bring from the domain of art that will inform and inspire expression and response? How can engagement with art be further deepened so that development in art leads to transformational learning? Those interested in the identity and mission of the profession might consider how a holistic vision of a field facilitates coherence and integration among learner-based, content-based, and issues-based approaches while leaving plenty of room for increasing complexity, creativity, inquiry, and critical dialogue.

### **About the Author**

Karen Carroll is Dean of the Maryland Institute College of Art Center for Art Education and the Florence Gaskins Harper Chair in Art Education. She became an NAEA Distinguished Fellow in 2004 and received the Lowenfeld Award in 2003 from the National Art Education Association.

### **Endnote**

1. Noted in remarks by Judith Burton to graduates at MICA's Student Teacher Showcase in May, 2005 and the topic of a 2006 presentation at the National Art Education Conference in Chicago.

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