

# Let's Play: Dewey, Aesthetics, and the Elementary Art Room

AMY PFEILER-WUNDER

*PhD Student, University of Iowa*

*In this paper I explore the diverse means by which we understand the term aesthetics and how we perceive meaningful endeavours for children in the elementary art classroom. Drawing on a myriad of approaches to teaching and to viewing the child-artist we come to understand the complex ways students situate the world around them. Exploring the nature of fictive play and children's imagination and creativity, drawing on ten years of experience in the classroom, I examine the contemporary views of visual culture to advocate a focus on a social aesthetics through the work of John Dewey. Thus I provide a site for students to be human innovators pertinent to the "creative economy" of our times through the voices they bring through image and story.*

## Introduction

Picture this: Meandering the halls of the art museum you are drawn to the French countryside and flowering gardens of Monet's paintings, mesmerized by the accuracy of pictorial imagery in the portraits of Rembrandt and awed by the scale and form of Greek and Roman art. I would surmise these experiences, deemed aesthetic in your mind, are linked to terms of beauty. Art Educator Kevin Tavin writes of this when he briefly traces the history of aesthetics to Kant who stated: "Taste in the beautiful is alone a disinterestedness and free satisfaction; for no interest, either sense or reason, here forces our assent...The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful" (Tavin, 2007).

Now picture this: A room of Kindergartners examines these same masters through the course of their work in an elementary art room. Again, I would guess they would label many of these images beautiful. However, between the work of the "art museum" and the work of their own hands, students figure out early on that one, rather than the other, is judged to be "real art." Beauty exists in the work of the masters. But, I shall argue, children are masters in their own right, as they translate their lived lives into drawn and painted images representing something of meaning.

Although 'I am an artist' is the mantra of the elementary art room, there is still a gap present between the life of the child and his or her art. Within the school institution, art is framed by the once a week fifty-minute session where students "do art". For the teacher, this short time frame requires an in-depth contemplation on which media, artists, subject matter, etc. to include, while meeting curriculum requirements and state and national mandates. At the same time, the teacher attempts to keep meaning making at the heart of the art experience.

Examining the work of the K-6 art room in the context of visual culture and aesthetics, I ask how the work accomplished with students can be most meaningful, and prepare them for a global community focused on creative enterprise. I shall argue art education becomes a fundamental means for human innovation, allowing each child to realize the artist within. I will employ John Dewey's notion of aesthetics and the "work of art" to bring insight to the aesthetic nature of children's art as a form of agency. By understanding the play to work dynamic outlined by Dewey, educators can recognize in children the potential of human imagination in the creative economy of our time. And they can nurture it.

## Aesthetics Through the Eyes of Dewey

When Dewey refers to aesthetics in the realm of the familiar, he leaves aside the esoteric notions associated with understanding high art. He returns contemporary human encounters with the lived and active world to a time in history when art did not have to be situated in a museum or even labeled “art”. Art acts as a form of communication, and images and objects from popular culture directly speak to human experience (Freedman, 2003). As Dewey reminds us,

Every art communicates because it expresses. It enables us to share vividly and deeply in meanings to which we had been dumb...Communication is the process of creating participation, of making common what had been isolated and singular'... the conveyance of meaning gives body and definiteness to the experience of the one who utters as well as to those who listen (1934, p. 253).

Upon first reading these words, one might argue Dewey would give little credit to the images we are bombarded by on a daily basis, such as the red and white spirals so symbolic of the Target ads, the high paced commercials between sets of TV dramas or sitcoms (Freedman, 2003), or everyday objects transformed into highly designed objects of “artistic merit” displayed in the aisles of any major shopping center (Postrel, 2003). Even if I quickly scan the items on the shelf, these are so ubiquitous in my mainstream life they often go unnoticed. Yet, I might find pleasure and delight in the fact that a roll of scotch tape can take the shape of a snail or be coated in a hot pink package (or in any color under the sun). I recall the words of Dewey, “An instantaneous experience is an impossibility, biologically and psychologically. An experience is a product; one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world” (p. 229). The encounter with a piece of Aboriginal art or the sheer awe felt at the sight of a pointillist painting by Seurat, or even the delight in walking the aisles of a Target store, is replete culturally with meaning. That is, meaning is derived not only from the instantaneous viewing of the object, but directly is related to one’s own history, identity, gender, and cognition of the world around them.

John Dewey’s definition of ‘aesthetic’ transcended mere viewing. Raymond Boisvert (1998) draws on the work of Dewey, critically examining how Dewey’s philosophy is important in contemporary society. Boisvert interprets Dewey’s idea of the “work of art” as an ongoing experience created through continuous reflection. Dewey emphasized the entire process, from the development of an idea by the artist, to the crafting of the work, and the life of the work (Boisvert, p. 125). Boisvert’s interpretation of Dewey emphasizes the formal qualities by which one views a work, but also understands that the piece is laden with other sensory qualifications. He recognizes the very social aspect of how the work speaks to the culture of the times. When Dewey uses the phrase, the “work of art,” he is not referring solely to the art-object itself; instead, the “work of art” moves beyond the piece itself, to the effects that object produces, i.e. its work. These effects are not stable, but change according to time, place, and individualities. Dewey states:

Perhaps what I mean by this can best be indicated by saying that I am not going to talk about art in terms of what we call works of art, but rather of what a human being undergoes and enjoys when he is in the presence of one of these works of art, in its presence not merely physically but with his make-up, with his full mind and feeling (1882-1953, LW.13.358).

Dewey is describing what the work art-object *does*. Integration of nature and experience could be illustrated this way: When individuals interpret the world around them, their experiences are melded through the physiology of human organism. But the mind is not static. Through reflection, a flowing and changing stream of comprehension is created. How do we use reflection in a postmodern world, where meaning seems to be constantly shifting and changing? How would Dewey explain the “work of art” in a time when defining art seems more and more complicated?

## **Another View: Postmodernism and Art**

Postmodern theory breaks away from mere formulaic structures such as line, color, shape etc. that “contain” the work. Instead, one is to examine the work through the lens of self. Reflection on the work is not an isolated “internal” act. The work is also transformed by external factors; by one’s identity in the social sphere he or she finds him-or herself immersed in.

Art critic, Grant Kester (2004) employs the term ‘dialogical art’ to refer to

Projects [which] all share a concern with the creative facilitation of dialogue and exchange...While it is common for a work to provoke dialogue among viewers, this typically occurs in response to a finished object. In these projects, on the other hand, conversation becomes an integral part of the work itself. (p. 8)

For example, there are several art movements associated with the idea of “sustainable art” or art as intervention. These art practices are interwoven into the social threads of the community, and the “work of art” is as an evolving process without an established end in view. These pieces disrupt established norms of what is easily understood as art. This creates a bifurcation between the readily known versus what is often hidden from the viewer including issues related to race, gender or socioeconomic class. Suzi Gablik (1991) repudiates the idea of the sole artist working for him-or herself in the confines of patriarchal standards forcing the viewer to contemplate the context of what is hidden. Gablik considers art and the artist’s role in terms of the social community. Gablik sees the artist creating a work not for the sake of the museum and mere viewing, but for the sake of the community, culturally, politically and socially. She favors an aesthetic of freedom rather than an aesthetic that is bound to the Cartesian model, which assumes a separation between individual and community. She states:

Most of us “see” art as we have been taught, through the language and concepts of Cartesian aesthetics, a tradition in which individuals and individual art works are the basic elements...In modern society, artists see themselves as quintessential free agents, pursuing their own ends. Our cultural myths support economic advancement and the hard-edged individualist writ large, rather than service, caring attitudes and participation. (Gablik, pg. 116)

Gablick and Kester’s philosophy of the artist working for the broader community, with the artist’s work contributing to the care of “other” fits well with Dewey’s ideas. I believe Dewey’s idea of a reflective process illustrates a partnership between the viewer and the artist. The artist is not concerned with a specific determined “end in view” but with what their work can do as a “living” component acting in a social environment. Dewey states, art is the living concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the social being...[leading to] the idea of art as a conscious idea--the greatest intellectual achievement in the history of humanity (1934, p. 26). Art, by setting up a potential dialogue with community, a voice for the unheard, or by acting as a form resistance may not always act in the ways the artist intended. I would argue Dewey found this the strength of art as offering potentialities through the imagined.

For example, homelessness might be ignored as problematic in a society for many reasons. There is a deeply held belief in the dream of equal opportunity for all. But, without enough support socially or without an examination of the fundamental reasons behind homelessness, the problem continues. As the homeless take up residence in public places, the homeless are both seen and unseen. Michael Rakowitz (2004) invented “inflatable homes” which can be hooked to outside air vents from buildings. His work offers a solution to the problem of affordable housing, while also “tearing open the hidden” by imagining what it would be like if every homeless person in the community used one of these. Is Rakowitz’s work “art”? Is there an aesthetic component to the work? Can form and function be separated?

Historically, many have attempted to categorize art into capital “A” Art, deemed “true” or “fine” by the art world as opposed to ‘everyday’ art. Art Critic Clive Bell worked to locate the essential form in a piece of

art. Modernism valorizes the fundamental qualities of a medium, such as a canvas in painting or form in sculpture. These essential forms were meant to be the driving factor in an aesthetic encounter with the work (Boisvert, 1998, p. 118). Such an aesthetic, by framing art in formalistic terms, severs an individual's personal and unique link to experience. Meaning is disjoined from the piece. Viewers accept set and conventional meanings, rather than seeking an individualized personal meaning. Tavin states: "This position [of aesthetics] reifies a gap between art and life, and promotes, however unintended, an ahistorical and apolitical perspective" (Tavin, 2007, p. 42).

For example, many times the art curriculum relies heavily on the Great Master artists as tools to learning about aesthetics. These artists are found in teaching portfolios with guides on what aesthetic characteristics merit discussion in the art room. If these "great" works are the only images seen and discussed in the art room, they naturally take on higher status. There is a strong chance that children may equate aesthetic experience with only the form and content of works categorized as "high." This becomes even more problematic when woman artists, minorities or cross-cultural references are excluded. Dewey's aesthetics develops from everyday life things and ruptures these boundaries. Through a "long period of gestation" this raw material of our experience is transformed, in a mutual dance of acting on and being acted upon by experience, becoming a form of expression (1934, p. 79). How does this transformation of the "raw materials" occur for children through the act of play?

### **Aesthetics, Fictive Play and Meaning for the Child**

For children, "experience" is the raw material of their constant playground. In the art room, this occurs through the transformation of materials into story (Zurmuehlen and Kantner, 1995). When students color with markers, various subject matters emerge from the blank white page. In my Kindergarten classroom, the common subject matter of the work often includes a wide array of hearts, animals and people. Many students thoroughly enjoy drawing stripes of color reminiscent of the fruity flavored gum they love. In their busyness of smelling the rainbow array of markers, chit chatting with friends, and simultaneously coloring, what level of meaning is present in their unfolding work?

Understanding aesthetics as discussed by Dewey in the realm of the art room, also includes comprehending meaning making for the child. As art teachers, we are trained to ask questions such as, "What does this mean to you?" When an individual describes an aspect of a thing or event as meaningful, its status moves away from being ordinary. Its relevance is heightened in lived experience. But, how do we define meaning? To fully know how aesthetic qualities exist, we must understand how meaning is "given" to an object. Consider these words by Dewey in the context of the meaning making endeavors of students:

The abiding struggle of art is thus to convert materials that are stammering or dumb in ordinary experience into eloquent media. Remembering that art itself denotes a quality of action and of things done, every authentic new work of art is in some degree itself the birth of a new art. (1934, p. 238)

Returning to the rainbow hues of my Kindergartners, I can't help but question whether there is significance in their work. The placement of color seems arbitrary at best, more of a soothing activity, which occupies time as they converse with friends. At first glance, an observer might assess colored stripes on sheets of paper as merely marks on the page, rather than a work of artistic substance. What happens when we confront the child and inquire about his or her intentions? One child's response might be, "Because I like it, I like colors." Fair enough, many of us have a certain affinity towards particular colors. We demonstrate our fondness by the colors on our walls or the hues present in the clothing we wear.

Yet, for an art teacher, the "because I like it" phrase isn't always enough of an explanation. I often probe a little deeper, to find out *why* they chose those colors and *why* they like them. Let's say that instead of using the phrase, "I like it" a child responds, "I chose pink because it is my favorite color and my whole room is

pink, it makes me feel happy; I chose brown because I have brown hair and I like my hair, and blue is the color of the pond in our back yard..." Suddenly, it is clear we enter the realm of context or experience melded into a concrete meaning-driven moment. But is it enough for the child to speak these words? How do we know that personal meaning exists? Art educator Marilyn Zurmuehlen (1995) discusses the importance of "intersubjectivity", which connects meaning to others. Her work draws on the work of Shutz, who writes "the unique biographical situation in which I find myself within the world at any moment of my existence is only to a very small extent of my own making...This means that this world is not only mine but also my fellow men's environment; moreover, these fellow men are elements of my own situation, as I am of theirs" (Zurmuehlen, pg. 1). The way children translate lived life into their work, develops from the individual's meaningful intentions expressed in the unique context of their lives. Children enter the realm of meaning by voicing experience through shared dialogue with others.

Dewey also explains that the child's choice gives the experience a reflective practice and moves it to the realm of meaningful. But discerning authenticity can still be an ambitious balance to locate. The many variables at play make it difficult to comprehend where the meaning derives; the experience the work draws from or the context of being asked by an adult in the art room. I would suggest Dewey finds both of these aspects of meaning making vital. Meaning develops from the building of situations from experience, not merely isolated stripes of color on the page. Over time, the melding of experience interwoven with one's identity creates significance. Dewey writes, "...The eye as the master organ of the whole being produces an undergoing, a return effect; this calls out another act of seeing with new allied supplementations with another increment of meaning and value, and so on, in a continuous building up of an aesthetic object" (1934, p. 228).

The child who utters, "I like it" may not outwardly reveal the meaning. The child's coloring may be in a period of incubation where future conversations and play may reveal the child's intention. Marilyn Zurmuehlen (1990) also discusses the idea of Praxis, which is the dialogue between critical reflection and action. I wonder how I facilitate an environment of meaning and elaboration on the content of student work? How do I tell the difference between significance and non-significance in a child's work, should I even make this distinction? Zurmuehlen & Kantner (1995) states, "Although critical reflection in these self narratives is incipient, any expression of contingency, such as one character's response to another's statement, or even of succession, such as the choice of 'then' can occur sensibly only with recourse, however brief and intuitive, to some sort of reflection" (p. 1).

In the meaning making endeavors of my students, much is divulged through their own individual practices. Meaning might not always have to be shared, but known as an intimate relationship between the physicality of creating with the body along with the intelligent action of the mind. However, Christine Thompson (1995) notes in her observation of children working in sketchbooks during a Saturday Workshop the focused response and intent of their work when an adult was present. In the end, the balance between shared meaning and independent thought seems to coexist. How then do children negotiate their personal interests and stories through play alongside the official work of the school?

### **Training the Mind: The Work and Play of Art through the Aesthetics of 'Everyday'.**

Children are in constant negotiation between the work of the school and the work of their own interests. Children often vacillate between drawings they feel meet the adult world vs. those tied to their own 'kid culture' (Buckingham, 1996) (Grace and Tobin, 2002). In terms of the art room, the unofficial signs, symbols, or images produced by the children may revolve around popular cartoon images such as Digimon characters or Sponge Bob Square Pants. Anne Dyson (1997) explores, through her work involving a writer's workshop for elementary students, the tensions between the official and unofficial worlds' of the school. According to Dyson, children use the school institution as a form of productive power as they negotiate

between their own world of likes and dislikes, but also “exchange one set of interpretive procedures for another” (p. 82). This is done in order to meet the demands of the school’s curriculum.

Through play, children have opportunities to imagine new possibilities of self through the images they select, use, and create stories with (Paley 2004, Tavin 2003, Duncum, 2004, and Attfield, 2000). When we use visual culture in the art room, it becomes a tool for teaching, which encompasses a wide range of materials related to gender, race and socioeconomics. It “reflects and contributes to the construction of knowledge, identity, beliefs, imagination, sense of time and place, feelings of agency and the quality of life at all ages” (Kiefer-Boyd, et. al., 2003). This conception of visual culture parallels Dewey’s bond between nature and experience. Dewey (1958) writes, “If we take advantage of the word esthetic in a wider sense than that of application to the beautiful and ugly, esthetic quality, immediate, final or self-enclosed, indubitably characterizes natural situations as they empirically occur” (p. 96) Dewey points out we are always immersed in a current situation but we are also constantly assessing and reflecting on the broader world around us.

I believe the art room occupies a space of both play and work. According to Dewey, play allows freedom for the child to imagine new possibilities. Work allows, for these imagined possibilities to emerge in continued thought and eventual testing of the ideas (1933, p. 212). In the art room, the teacher is often able to observe the students develop from Kindergarten through sixth grade. Over this extended time period, each individual child’s style of art emerge from play. A young child will often not fully conceive how mixing colors can create the illusion of depth. In Kindergarten, play often begins when white paint accidentally mixes with red to create pink. At some point, overworking the color palette will obscure all color. This basic mixing evolves over time, so a child understands a tad of color mixed with another can have dramatic effects. Eventually, the students begin to use the terms related to color theory in their work. Play is given meaning, as a broader knowledge of concepts develops into work. As Dewey states, “when things become signs, when they gain a representative capacity as standing for other things, play is transformed from mere physical exuberance into an activity involving a mental factor” (1933, p. 210).

When the students move from play to work, they also move to abstract thought. According to Dewey, abstract thinking is the direction education should proceed because a child find’s “... delight in thinking for the sake of thinking”(1933, p. 226). On the other hand, concrete thought “denotes meaning definitely marked off from other meanings so that it is readily apprehended by itself such as the words table and chairs (p. 221). Abstract thinking aligns with the idea of play, as children’s experimentation moves to further thinking of new ideas, which involves work. Dewey explains work as the building up of meanings while also testing them in actual conditions (p. 212). Balance between work and play brings together the concrete and abstract and is a form of art in its own right. Children’s playfulness may seem arbitrary, when in fact this playfulness embedded in story and action, allows the child to perform various possibilities of seeing the world around them. The child’s joy in new discoveries through play becomes work when meaning is developed from a “mental attitude”. This involves taking the “meanings aroused and built up in free play, but controls[ing] their development by seeing to it they are applied...[to] the observable structures of things themselves” (p. 211). This work to play dynamic is also illustrated by Dewey through the means individuals come to understand art. Dewey states: “Thus the theme has insensibly passed over into the relation of means and consequence, process and product, the instrumental and consummatory. Any activity that is simultaneously both, rather than in alteration and displacement, is art” (1958, p. 361). How then, do we create a classroom where the dynamic of work and play is a living and breathing component of children’s meaning making experiences?

### **Work and Play: The Child and the Creative Economy in the Art Classroom**

The social structure outlined by Richard Florida (2002) in discussing the *Rise of the Creative Class* illustrates the work and play of the art room. Through open-ended projects, students use dialogue to be

creative in how they problem solve with materials. The term 'creative economy' derives from the notion of the successful workforce as one driven through human innovation. Florida (2002) outlines key components to "the social structure of creativity" which include:

- New systems for technological creativity and entrepreneurship
- New and more effective models for producing goods and services
- A broad social, cultural and geographic milieu conducive to creativity of all sorts (p. 48).

Students, in the art classroom, connect their art to personal meaning by expressing their voice in relationship to the world around them. Children both imagine new possibilities, and work to illustrate their thinking through the materials available to them.

For example, as my fourth graders constructed models of robots that would help make their life easier, drawings emerged with "Inspector-Like-Gadget-Arms" able to groom, feed, and entertain any pooch. Everyday objects such as CD's, old computer parts, and small boxes were new inventions "on site" as they were named and designed for the duties they would provide. With a keen awareness, students were creatively imagining new products and services for their future. These ideas are anchored from a myriad of sources; futuristic TV shows and movies, on-going conversations about their childhood duties, and traditional aesthetic models related to the elements and principles of design they employed in their work.

The idea of the "creative economy" offers a lens by which we view local, national and the global economy and the "capital" of human beings. Human capacity for intervention is integral to this new economy, where there is less emphasis on rank in a company. Instead, what each individual has to offer in the business or company is given much weight (Florida, 2002). In the classroom, the role of the teacher is vital to allowing 'play' to move to 'work.' Children must be allowed to imagine new possibilities in their ideas, but also have assistance in focusing their thinking. The teacher must see his or her role as both facilitator and learner. Maxine Greene calls for pedagogy in the classroom where the children are not the only ones examining lived experience. Teachers are also to be in constant dialogue with the ideas, contexts, history and experiences they bring to the lessons and "environment" they create. Greene draws on the philosopher Sartre, who discusses the importance of a reflective life, based on an examination of one's world. Greene writes, "Specific human acts, as Sartre put it, cut across the social milieu even as they take its determinations into account; and they transform the world to a degree, not in spite of but on the basis of given conditions" (p. 51). She goes on to describe a "dialectical relation [which] marks every human situation; it may be the relation between individual and the environment, self and society, or living consciousness and object-world" (p. 52). The art room becomes a place where students can come to realize the potential they have as human innovators because they are constantly reflecting upon and working to create meaningful experience through the stories their work tells and the materials they use. This in turn is directly related to the aesthetics set out by Dewey and, it is critical important to the development of the creative economy.

Children's views of art are not limited to modern principles of elements and designs, nor exclusively tied to terms of beauty, or even to the art room culture. Contemporary Art Educator, Paul Duncum (1999) employs the term the "aesthetics of everyday" which involve "objects, places, and experiences that for most of us, children and adults alike, form part of ordinary, daily life" The are neither especially refined, nor are they exotic in the sense that they belong to someone else's culture" (p. 295). This is reiterated by Kevin Tavin who argues for an abandonment of the "aesthetic baggage," "the unfettered...discourse of aesthetics, with all of its loaded categories, ideological baggage, and troubling taxonomies" (2007, p. 43). Instead, he urges individuals to embark on a postmodern language, which "begins with the basic premise that responding to images is primarily a process of socialization and signification, and always connected to the material conditions of the world" (2007, p. 43). The art making becomes the "ongoing work" of an art room, and of children's lives outside the walls of the school institution. As Dewey states,

Life is a self-renewing process through action upon the environment and ...the renewal of physical existence goes, in the case of human beings, the re-creation of beliefs, ideals, hopes, happiness, misery and practices. The continuity of any experience through the renewing of the social group is a literal fact. Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life. (1916, p. 2).

I believe that what comes naturally to human beings, the sense of meaning making we seem inherently born with, is nurtured in the art room and becomes the basis for a truly lived life.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I explored John Dewey's notion of aesthetics and the "work of art" to bring insight to the aesthetic nature of children's art as form of agency that gives them a broader understanding of the world around them. By understanding the play and work dynamic set out by Dewey as a means to create and problem solve, children become human innovators in the "creative economy" of our times. I believe that creating a social aesthetic involves keeping fictive play an active component in the "creative heart" of children.

A quiet stillness recently enveloped the elementary building I work in, as students put their noses to the test paper, filling in little bubbles while teachers nervously hoped the scores would bring the school to the level of achievement outlined by the No Child Left Behind Legislation. The art room was empty of many students that week, as without notice students had been pulled for test taking. It seems the art room is positioned as a place of "play" outside of "real" academic work of school. To counteract this, the art room must be conceived as necessary in its own right. (Pogrebin, 2007).

The art room occupies a unique space in the school institution. There, students negotiate meaning through the visual, in context of the everyday, opening the imagination to new possibilities in self and in others. Children often comment they want to be artists when they grow up and I remind them they already are. Why is this important? It is not that I expect every child who has been in my classroom to get a professional art degree, it is because I believe in a different possibility offered through art by Dewey's emphasis on reflection, renewal and the social aesthetics. Students come to understand, through the process of making and discussing art, the human capability of various means to communicate individual meaning in the world around them.

As Maxine Greene states,

If, below the level of consciousness, our imagination is at work tidying up the chaos of sense experience, at a different level it may, as it were, untidy it again. It may suggest that there are vast, unexplored areas, huge spaces of which we may get only an occasional awe-inspiring glimpse, questions raised by experience about whose answers we can only with hesitation speculate. (1995, pp. 207-208)

Meandering around the tables of the art room, the sixth graders had just come to art after a morning of test taking. Working on comic books, the students had created quite a wealth of stories. The students were in deep dialogue as they translated their story visually, and described the basic premise of their storyline. As the stories unfolded, I found myself on the outside looking in. Their comic strips were filled with explicit meaning for the students of their class. As the art teacher, I once again discovered human innovation derived from a leap of imagination as each child constructed alternate models of self, a wide array of characters and storylines. Illustrating the work and play dynamic outlined by Dewey, the voices of children constructing narratives through multimodal means of production and process keep meaning making at the heart of student learning.

## References

- Buckingham, D. (1996) *Moving Images: Understanding Children's Emotional Responses to Television* (New York: Manchester Press).
- Boisvert, R. D. (1998) *John Dewey: Rethinking Our Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press).
- Danko-McGhee, K. (2006) Nurturing Aesthetic Awareness in Young Children: Developmentally Appropriate Art Viewing Experiences, *Art Education* 59:3.
- Dewey, J. (1933) *How We Think* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company).
- Dewey, J. (1934) *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee Book).
- Dewey, J. (1958) *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover Publications).
- Dewey, J. (1882-1953) *The Collected Works of John Dewey*.
- Duncum, P. (1999) A Case for an Art Education of Everyday Aesthetic Experiences, *Studies in Art Education*, 40:4.
- Ducum, P. (2007) Nine Reasons for the Continuing Use of an Aesthetic Discourse in Art Education, *Art Education*, 60:2.
- Dyson, A. (1997) *Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture and Classroom Literacy* (New York and London: Teacher's College Press).
- Fishman, S. (1998) *John Dewey and the Challenge of Classroom Practice* (New York and London: Teacher's College Press).
- Florida, R. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books).
- Freedman, K. (2003) *Teaching Visual Culture* (New York & London: Teacher's College Press).
- Gablik, S. (1991) *The Reenchantment of Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson).
- Greene, M. (1995) *Releasing the Imagination* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass).
- Kellogg, K. (1970) How Adults Influence Children's Art in *Analyzing Children's Art*, (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company) pp. 15-22.
- Kester, G. (2004) *Conversation Pieces* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press).
- Kiefer-Boyd, K. & Amburgy, P. & Knight, W. (2003) Three Approaches to Teaching Visual Culture in K-12 school contexts, *The Journal of the National Art Education Association*, 56, pp. 44-51.
- Paley, V. (2004) *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (London: The University Of Chicago Press).
- Pogrebin, R. (2007, August 4) Arts Education: Book Tackles Old Debate: Role of Art In Schools, New York Times, retrieved August 30, 2007, from <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Postrel, V. (2003) *The Substance of Style: How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture and Consciousness* (New York: Harper Collins).
- Smith, R. (2006) *Culture and the Arts in Education* (New York and London: Teacher's College Press).
- Tavin, K. (2007) Eyes Wide Shut: The Use and Uselessness of the Discourse of Aesthetics in Art Education, *Art Education*, 60:2.
- Stankiszewski, M. A. *Believing is Seeing: Creating the Culture of Art* (New York: Penguin Books).
- Thompson, C. (1995) What Should I Draw Today? Sketchbooks in Early Childhood, *Art Education*, 48:5.
- Thompson, N., & Sholette, G. (eds.). (2004) *The interventionists: Users' manual for the creative disruption of everyday life* (Massachusetts: Mass MoCA)
- Zurmeulen, M. (1990) *Studio Art: Praxis, symbol and presence* (Reston, VA: National Art Education Association).
- Zurmeulen, M. & Kanter, L. (1995) The Narrative Quality of Children's Art in: C. Thompson (ed). *The Visual Arts and Early Childhood Learning* (Reston, Virginia: National Art Education Association) pp. 6-9.