

Beattie, acknowledging, then, the ways in which "all biography is a form of autobiography" (Winston Rhodes, cited in Hood, 1990). This last statement might sound as though this book is somehow deficient because it doesn't satisfy any one of these special interests, but that would not be the case. While Beattie does not address in direct ways many of the issues raised above that might be organized along the lines of "the politics of the personal", her text nonetheless can be read as a "meta-story" and in so doing is of particular relevance to scholars who are interested in examining procedural issues in doing collaborative biographical studies that of necessity are about both phenomenon and method.

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NICHOLAS PALEY. *Finding Art's Place: Experiments in contemporary education and culture*. New York & London: Routledge (1995). 185 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-415-90607-5.

This is a book no doubt intended for art education specialists; but it should be of interest to anyone involved in helping children, especially adolescents, who grapple with meaningful learning. Paley's text is a somewhat experimental investigation of three different settings in which "at-risk" children address their learning and social challenges directly, and with positive actions, through artistic means. Although the children have their own singular aims and characteristics, their problems have a familiar ring, applicable to a multitude of settings.

A disquieting feature of Paley's book is the not-too-subtle message that these children achieve their results in spite of traditional schooling, rather than because of it. Thus any reader who is a regular classroom teacher is likely to ask, "Can I adopt some of these ideas?" The question is well worth asking, if one can achieve anything akin to the evolution in learning described by Paley. While prompting the question, Paley also provides a view of art education as an instrument for political

awareness, critical thinking, and social change. As such this text joins a growing body of literature that attempts to eradicate any vestiges of the long outdated idea that art is an expendable nicety.

Paley's topic is intriguing, and inspirational – but not “nice”, in the sense that one thinks of polite school art. In his first example he focuses on artist – educator Tim Rollins and his Kids of Survival (K.O.S.). The teacher and his kids, working in an after school, non-school setting, “. . . have collaborated to explore, through the study of works of literary distinction and through art making, many of the complex social, political, and ideological factors which shape their daily lives in the South Bronx” (p. 22). He often works with the same teenage children over a period of several years; and some have recently gone on to study to become teachers themselves.

Where K.O.S. is the story of individual awareness that arises out of group work and a sense of community, Paley's description of the work of Sadie Bening provides dramatic contrast. Bening is the quintessential loner, a school drop-out who turns to her rudimentary video camera and the security of her bedroom to explore the evolution of her self-awareness and sexual awakening in autobiographical fashion. The results have been seen in experimental film festivals internationally and are now distributed by the Video Data Bank in Chicago.

Photographic imagery is also the subject of Paley's third example. In this case the works are the result of the efforts of a photojournalist-turned-teacher, Jim Hubbard, who provides cameras and basic photographic skills to the homeless children of Washington's streets. The results of his protégés' initial efforts have gone on a national tour and spawned a “. . . multi-sited enterprise struggling with the actualities of its own industrialization: rapid development, program promotion, continuous reorganization, and ongoing evaluation. . . .” (p. 121).

All the youths mentioned in Paley's book have produced works that have received extensive critical acclaim within the art world. More importantly, the activities have given the participants a heightened sense of identity and self-esteem, an increased understanding of their worlds along with their current and potential roles in them, and an ability to articulate evolving viewpoints. Their accomplishments are an important reminder that it is possible to instill in children a love of learning – learning that teachers and students alike see as meaningful reflections upon their everyday lives. The question remains, “Can schools do it too?”

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