

Because the aim of her book is to provoke and agitate for further debate, she seems more concerned with the impact of her approach than the strength of her inferences. Yet I wonder whether Rose's conclusions tell the reader, as she said in her preface, "what it really means to learn with a computer".

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LIORA BRESLER & CHRISTINE THOMPSON (Eds.) *The Arts in Children's Lives: Context, culture, and curriculum*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers (2002). 256 pp. US\$77.00 (hb). (ISBN 1-4020-0471-0). US\$27.50 (pb). ISBN 1-4020-0554-7.

Let me start this review with a confession. I had hoped that I could skim the text, get the gist of the ideas, write the review quickly and move on to the rest of the pile of unfinished tasks that clutter my desk. Alas, the plan went awry. The book is just too interesting to skim. Not only is it timely and educationally important; the writing is almost uniformly invitational and eloquent. I had to pause and ponder frequently, and often found myself saying, "My students should read this." In part, this was because the general tenor of discussion confirms what I tell my students in art education; there is nothing like reinforcement after all. And sometimes I have wondered what others are saying to their students. This book reassures me that many of us are indeed addressing the same issues and using similar language to do so, even when our disciplines are different. Indeed, for me, one of the rewarding features of this book is that I found examples relevant to my own field, art education, within the chapters on music, dance, literature and drama education. Perhaps I should have expected this, but I did not. Our separate disciplines do have their own vocabularies and emphases. Familiarity with one does not automatically provide insight into the others. This book, however, does have plenty to offer anyone who is open to the suggestion that the arts are, or should be, part of basic education; and perhaps a skeptic or two might be persuaded as well.

The book is divided into three sections – context, developmental theory, and curriculum content and pedagogy. Taking their cue from music, the editors have begun the text with a prelude in lieu of a preface; and each section is introduced with an interlude. The main body of the text consists of fifteen chapters, each written by a different author, many of whom will be familiar to readers of the various disciplines represented. In this short review I cannot comment on each of the chapters. I will, however, try to give a general sense of the text as a whole, as well as some of the dominant and interlinked ideas and pleasurable highlights.

In the *Prelude* the editors remind us that in education across the curriculum the emphasis is on meaning making, that symbolic language is central to early learning, and that the arts share these concerns. In other words, in certain fundamental respects that have to do with intellectual and interpretive activity, the arts have a similar focus to the rest of the curriculum. The arts are not peripheral.

The first section, *Context*, addresses the explicit and implicit ways in which arts education is influenced: by the artistic cultures in our communities, by teachers and parents, by informal and formal learning environments, learning theories, and so forth. The first author, Karen Hamblen, sets the tone for the rest of the section. Her argument is that for arts education there are three influential learning settings, or contexts – professional arts communities, schools, and the locale of everyday experience. Each milieu operates under different constraints, customs and expectations. But each has something to offer the arts, something that often escapes arts education because the differences aren't noted. She says, "Unless . . . school art incorporates *principles* applicable to other art contexts, children may be losing contact with their own art worlds as well as access to the art of professionals" (p. 14). She offers the example of copying. This is generally frowned upon in schools, from grades 1 – 12; yet at the professional and local levels it occurs continuously. Interestingly, she feels that pre-school may have lessons from which the later grades might borrow.

Some examples from later sections in the text illustrate Hamblen's point. As Christine Thompson's delightful chapter from Section II makes clear, at the pre-school and kindergarten levels we encourage children to socialize and learn from each other. It's largely an oral community, and imitation is an excellent teacher. Further, everyday problem solving is context-specific, experiential and opportunistic. These are all features that rightly belong in art education classes – but often don't appear there. Similarly, Liora Bresler's chapter from Section III points clearly to the gaps between contexts and the ensuing loss to art education. For example, many teachers still cling to the idea that self-expression is the mainspring of art education (a stance not supported in this text). In the classes she observed, however, Bresler cites a specific lack of personal expression. She states, "Expression requires attention and involvement. . . . Without knowledge and personal investment, artwork was dutiful at best, sloppy and meaningless at worse (sic). . ." (p. 172). Thompson's and Bresler's chapters are testaments to Hamblin's claims.

Where Hamblin addresses art education specifically, her arguments are taken up by Bruno Nettl on behalf of music education. His chapter is all that academic writing should be but often isn't – eloquent, warm and gently humorous. Nettl is interested in how a musical tradition is transmitted. He is convinced that because of the pervasiveness of music people learn the

elements and values of their culture through music. In other words, music is a key component of the context for cultural absorption. Then Nettl turns the idea around. He asks, "How do the elements and values of a culture affect the learning of music?" Having asked the question, he goes on to examine the teaching styles in different cultures, for example, in the West, in India and Iran. In communities where the written tradition is strong, this has led to kinds of music quite different from that produced in oral cultures. While this might seem obvious, Nettl's point is that there is a recent growth of interest in the music of other cultures and considerable sharing of musical traditions. This focus on "otherness" and diversity is in keeping with current educational emphasis on plurality. Music helps to exemplify those lessons.

In a similar vein, Brent Wilson discusses the drawings of children from different cultures. He notes that once children advance beyond certain more or less universal stages of the drawing the human figure, the drawings take on the influences of their culture. Wilson makes a compelling argument with his investigation of Japanese children's non-school drawings. He notes, for example, that in Japan there exists a huge industry referred to as "*manga*". These are what we in North America would call comics. In Japan the industry is so pervasive that children develop *manga* clubs (*zines*), and much of their own drawing shows the direct influence of the comic graphic style. Wilson maintains that, for these children, the meanings inherent in their drawings are dependent upon a tension between artistic traditions and the child's reality. If so, then the *manga* phenomenon can tell us something, not only about the children, but also about the society of which they are a part. Wilson points to the woodcuts of Hokusai as the origin of *manga*. But those traditional figures have evolved in ways we might not have expected. For example, the current *manga* generally depict females with saucer-sized Caucasian eyes and blond hair, sort of a Japanese version of the Barbie doll. Wilson argues that the Japanese people have become so aware of the American influence upon their lives that "the doll-like figures represent 'the Japanese' and 'the other' simultaneously" (p. 45). Further, the *manga* exemplifies a "pervasive elaborate system of shared images that carry meaning, beliefs, values and understanding" (p. 48). Thus does the *manga* provide a means of exploring what it means to be Japanese. This surely is no insignificant phenomenon; and the children's interest in emulating the *manga* style in their own drawings is testament to its power. Wilson concludes his chapter by reminding us that such drawings bear no relation to what the children do for school art. This begs the question of the relations between the settings that Hamblin raises at the beginning of the text.

If the *manga* can be considered as a form of popular culture apprenticeship in Japan, in another chapter Minette Mans addresses a more traditional form of apprenticeship. She examines song and dance education in Na-

mibia, as it has been maintained until recently. She sees the traditional practice as an informal induction into the moral and philosophic systems of Namibian society. Mans notes, "Namibian orature has tended to emphasize pragmatism and holism, along with a very real sense of society and its connection with the spiritual world" (p. 73). Thus does the musical world reflect cultural practice, values and beliefs. In an oral society such beliefs and practices evolve slowly, from master to apprentice, and within the context of the local community. Mans notes with regret that modern, western-influenced education, with its emphasis on bureaucracy and uniform delivery, has resulted in much less knowledge of local song and dance.

Section II, on developmental theory, continues the pluralistic flavour of the first section; that is, it covers several of the arts disciplines, and some of the work looks beyond North American education. The final chapter in this section, for example, by Schifra Schonmann, examines drama education in Israel. His notions of tension, aesthetic distance, and young children's abilities to grasp complex and abstract issues such as self-esteem, and to perform acts of critical thinking, complement the other chapters well and seem to bring the section full circle. I say this because the section begins with an examination of literature and its cultural (as opposed to biological) development, by Kieran Egan and Michael Ling. Their views are inclusive of all the arts. They state, for example, "the arts . . . are the fundamental means with which we find and experience ourselves and the world" (p. 94). Nonetheless, they move literature to the foreground with a large claim: "The story was perhaps the most important of all social invention. . . ." (p. 92). They then proceed to explain how stories, as concrete and experiential as they are, permit us to address notions that help to connect us with our communities; such notions are abstractions – good and evil, security and fear, solitude and company. The story has, then, an essential underlying binary structure. In turn, this structure has three features. The first, abstraction, I have just mentioned. The other two are affect, and expandability to anything that can be organized in terms of affective concepts. I was particularly struck by this analysis. It corresponds to what I try to do in art education; that is, I try to get my students to understand that to convert any theme successfully into an art lesson they must search out and find a way to represent concretely the affective component. Thus are abstractions such as solitude made experiential; and it is difficult to suggest solitude without at the same time implying its opposite. With this emphasis on abstraction these authors oppose the more common notion that in teaching we should move from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Instead, they recommend a metaphoric leap. Other authors in this volume, such as Daniel Walsh, argue precisely the opposite; that is, he reinforces the notion of familiar to unfamiliar. Readers will have to decide for themselves whether to move from one side of the fence to the other.

The third section focuses on the interplay between content and pedagogy. Again, the section is inclusive. It covers visual art, poetry, and video, a nod in the direction of evolving technology in the classroom. To conclude this review, however, I will confine my remarks to discussion of Susan Stinson's chapter, *What we teach is who we are: The stories of our lives*. She captures eloquently what it means to be a teacher in the arts. Moreover, her description provides a model that could be adopted much more widely across the curriculum. Stinson achieves this through her focus on values. She states, ". . . recognizing our values and visions is not enough if we are to go beyond the habitual to the intentional in teaching. . . ." (p. 155). She goes on to emphasize the need for questioning and reflection. "Without such questioning, teaching who we are can mean ignoring the needs of our children and the context of our communities" (p. 155). In other words, teaching, like art education, is not primarily about self-expression. It's about sharing in a common goal, a search for meaning. In the arts, this is achieved through heightened awareness, not only of our surroundings, but also of our individual responses to them. As Stinson observes, this requires personal commitment, or engagement, along with creativity and skill development. To these requirements must be added an awareness of social context. Individual response and even creativity, by themselves, lead to solitary existence. Humans are meant to be social beings, to be responsible to themselves and others, to share and celebrate their humanity. What Stinson is describing here is an aesthetic orientation to life itself. It is Dewey's concept of unity, directed not to art but to teaching. I'll close with one last quotation, one that I think sums up the aspirations of the whole text, and one I hope readers will take away with them:

Taking the opportunity to think about meaningful moments in our lives, those that come to exemplify something we believe, helps us become more conscious of our visions and values. Asking ourselves questions about our values and visions gives us the opportunity for professional growth.

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