Aesthetic Experience and the Construction of Meanings

MICHAEL PARSONS

I have known Ralph Smith since the late sixties, when I went to the University of Illinois as a graduate student and he arrived as an Assistant Professor. He has been a good friend since that time, generous, supportive, and interesting to talk with. So it is a pleasure to write about him. He has been a major influence in thinking about art education in North America for all these years and has consistently articulated a point of view of central importance in our field. And I have always found that discussion with him means wrestling with important issues.

This essay is about one of the issues I have wrestled with in conversation with Ralph, sometimes in person but more often in my own mind. It has to do with only one of the many contributions he has made to art education but it is one that is foundational to his thought and to the thought of many others. The issue is the value of the idea of the "aesthetic," as in the "aesthetic experience" of persons and the "aesthetic qualities" of objects. The idea provides us a way of talking about artworks and our response to them that defines and justifies some goals for art education and influences our thinking about curriculum. The interest of the topic is that there has recently arisen a tendency in art education to abandon talk about the aesthetic in favor of talk about meaning, as in the "meanings" of artworks.

I want to weigh these alternatives. This is because I have not found myself able to join decisively with either side of what often appears to be more like a conflict than a discussion in the field of art education. I want to portray the change as an evolution rather than a revolution, and to find areas of agreement as well as disagreement around the difficult issues of cognition and our response to artworks. And I want to ask whether the differences between these two ways of talking, which of course are embedded in theories about art, are responsible for differences about more practical matters, such as the school art curriculum.

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As an aside, I would say that the discourse of art education sometimes tends to be contentious, even polemical, and too often it has been so in connection with Ralph’s views. Some disagree reasonably with Ralph about, for instance, his emphasis on the study of great works from the Western artworld, the importance of teaching art as a separate subject, or his relative lack of interest in children’s art-making. Such disagreement is to be expected, even welcomed, in a field like ours. But others go much further and label him an elitist, a formalist, or as unsympathetic with multicultural interests, without much discussion of his actual views. In doing so they make him seem less generous than he is and they fail to engage with his thought in a way that would produce further insight. It is not clear to me whether this is a result of misunderstanding or of a style of writing that seeks conflict and creates straw men to attack to ensure victory. I prefer to look for our areas of agreement as well as to define our differences. It is important to acknowledge our common problems and to recognize the complexities of our changing ideas in the midst of equally complex changes in society and the artworld.

First, I will first spell out my understanding of Ralph’s view of the aesthetic and its central importance and then look at the idea of substituting the notion of meaningfulness for it.

Talk About Aesthetic Experience

Ralph consistently argued that the central goal of art education should be the promotion of the ability to have aesthetic experience. In Excellence II he says:

I take the principal objective of art education to be the development of a disposition to appreciate excellence in art for the sake of the worthwhile experience such appreciation is capable of bringing about. Following a number of notable theorists, the name I give to such experience is aesthetic experience.¹

This view was fundamental to Ralph throughout his career, that aesthetic experience is valuable in itself because of the consummatory qualities it lends to human life. He calls this value intrinsic and insists that it is the basic justification for art education. At the same time, he is willing to allow that aesthetic experience has further desirable consequences, some of them cognitive, such as insight into various aspects of life or a general liveliness of mind, and others not, such as a sense of enhanced well-being. Though desirable, these consequences do not provide the justification for art education.

In placing the idea of aesthetic experience at the center of his thought, Ralph followed a major tradition in Anglo-American aesthetics. He spent a lot of time in his teaching and writing discussing the notion of aesthetic experience, and delighted in collecting accounts of particular cases. In Excellence II
he reviews the different accounts of it by five major recent philosophers, beginning with Monroe Beardsley and ending with Marcia Eaton, and it is clear that his own view of it is eclectic, non-dogmatic, and complex.

Briefly, we call an experience aesthetic when it has a number of characteristics. Most important is that the experience is object-centered — focused on the qualities of some object external to the self. The qualities are experienced as belonging to the object itself and are experienced as what Monroe Beardsley called “phenomenologically objective.” The qualities may belong to simple elements of the work, such as particular lines or colors, or to regions, where the elements interact and give rise to qualities of much greater complexity. They may be more or less intense, more or less complex, and (at the level of the work as a whole) more or less unified. The more they are so, the more valuable experiencing them will be. Because these qualities are directly grasped by the viewer in perception, we can say that the experience of them has the same qualities, more or less intense, more or less complex, and more or less unified. In short, aesthetic experience is the grasp of aesthetic qualities of the object and the basic sense of “aesthetic” is the same in both cases.

Other characteristics of aesthetic experience include a sense of heightened awareness and of control that allows us to contemplate the qualities of the object, even if they are qualities of pain or tragedy that might otherwise overwhelm us, or be too aversive. This sense is sometimes described as emotional detachment, though that can be misleading because it is accompanied by a sense of intense engagement with the object. There is often also a sense of freedom, of release from the preoccupations of the self, and of insight into the world. This latter is important because there is no doubt that in contemporary terms aesthetic experience is cognitive, not only because it is the result of active attention and investigation but also because the direct grasp of the qualities of objects is itself an act of cognition. One knows the object in such experience.

Given this view, it is obviously important that students have direct aesthetic experience of artworks, as opposed to only talking or reasoning about them. It is not enough to know about an artwork, though knowledge is important; one must know it directly. Ralph says:

The term “aesthetic experience” is often used to refer to the sort of experience typically afforded by art. But terminology is less important than the recognition of a difference between having knowledge about art and personally experiencing its presence and power. No one has marked this distinction better than Frank Sibley. It does no good, he said, simply to be told that a work of art has a certain character or meaning; one has to see and feel its qualities and import for oneself. Appreciation is possible in no other way.2

I imagine we all recognize this contrast. It is a rhetorically powerful commonplace in the literature of art education, often phrased as the contrast
between knowing *in* art and knowing *about* art. I will later question whether this contrast continues to be valuable for art education.

One can have aesthetic experience of any object, including natural objects, such as landscapes, mountains, cloud formations, and artifacts, such as chairs, street scenes, machines. But works of art are more likely to promote aesthetic experience in the highest degree; that is, to sustain the most intense, complex, insightful and unified experiences. This is because they have been designed to promote (or selected for their capacity to promote) that experience. Moreover, artworks differ greatly in their capacity to do this.

![Pablo Picasso, "Weeping Woman with Hands"; © 1992 ARS, N.Y./SPADEM, Paris.](image)
To complete Ralph's basic argument for art education, one has only to add that, while all people have aesthetic experience, the capacity to have high quality aesthetic experience requires education. And because aesthetic experience is one of life's intrinsic goods, such education should not be withheld from anyone. It belongs by right not to the leisured class only but to all people (this is the response to the charge of "elitism").

I will give a brief example of aesthetic experience, both for clarity and because I will make use of it later. It is taken from a discussion I had with a college student, whom I will call Pamela, of a reproduction of Picasso's Weeping Woman. This case exemplifies, in my opinion, what is meant by the "direct" perceptual grasp of the aesthetic qualities of an artwork. Pamela said, about the Picasso:

Well, it's very emotional, and it's obvious. The lines, look at those tight lines, the fingers, the clenching, and the woman tearing her teeth out with that, the angles, I think the angles, the straightness, just those lines! It's amazing you can do something so simple to get that tension in there, in those lines, the pulling on the handkerchief, the feeling in these hands — give that tension and anguish.

Pamela here talks about the qualities of the elements (of the lines, their straightness, their tightness) and of regions (the tension and anguish of the pulling on the handkerchief, the teeth and the hands) in a way that suggests she sees them as part of the object ("it's obvious" means that anyone could see these qualities). I take this to be a clear case of an aesthetic experience.

The Relation of Knowing "In" Art and Knowing "About" Art

We should note that Ralph thought that art education cannot really produce aesthetic experience for students. It can only develop the ability to have such experience. This ability consists in a disposition and some particular kinds of knowledge, habits, and values, to all of which together Ralph calls "aesthetic percipience." Cultivating aesthetic percipience is the basic purpose of art education. Pamela was a graduate student of art and we could say that she had considerable aesthetic percipience.

Although we speak of Pamela's "direct" perception of the qualities of the Picasso, it is clear that she can grasp them only because she has certain kinds of knowledge and habits, especially in this case a general familiarity with the style and with ways of talking about it. The qualities seen by Pamela are also probably influenced by her knowledge of Picasso and the history of stylistic development in which it played a part. Weeping Woman is for her a recognizable part of the history of art, that is, of Western art.

Ralph was always clear about the importance of art history. He likes to cite the writings of Marcia Eaton for her account of aesthetic qualities as being accessible only in the context of particular art traditions. Eaton argues
that we can tell that someone has grasped the aesthetic qualities of a work only if they can talk about them (or in other ways behave towards them) in ways developed within particular art traditions. In such a contextualist theory, aesthetic qualities are not there for anyone to grasp; rather they require the viewer to have certain kinds of contextual knowledge and skills, especially perhaps discursive skills, for their perception. For such a viewer, however, they are there in the object for perception.

This account conforms well to what is often called a constructivist approach to cognition because the aesthetic qualities, though they are experienced as immediately perceived, require the constructive activity of the viewer. The viewer must make connections between what she knows and what she sees; and not every viewer is equipped to make the appropriate connections. This can be seen from my own interviews with a 12-year-old child, whom I will call Janet. Janet, looking at the Weeping Woman, understood that it was in a certain style but the style meant something very different to her.

Janet: I think she's got the hand backwards. It can't go like this and be showing these knuckles right here.

Interviewer: That's right. Why is it done that way?
Janet: Because it's mixed up.
Interviewer: Would it be better if the knuckles were on the right side?
Janet: No, because if everything were perfect in the picture, it wouldn't be — it wouldn't have the same style as it does.

Interviewer: It's a style that's meant not to be perfect?
Janet: Yeah.
Interviewer: Why would the artist do it that way?
Janet: Maybe the artist knew — found out that he did it wrong, and then he made the whole picture the same.

As I have said, on this account aesthetic response has a cognitive character, although the notion of "cognitive" has been debated since at least the 1960s. There is the sense in which Arnheim memorably persuaded us that perception itself is cognitive. There is the "symbol system" sense of cognition that we find in Nelson Goodman and Project Zero, in which our response to the Picasso is based on reading the visual elements as a symbol system. Ralph's account is that the direct perceptual grasp of its qualities is itself an act of cognition because it constitutes knowledge of those qualities. This seems to me a more generous and accurate view of cognition in aesthetic response, though his own rejection of the Project Zero approach had more to do with its wholesale adoption of the image of the child as an artist. I will discuss a more interpretive view of cognition in a moment.

For this reason, Ralph finds it easy to agree that aesthetic experience, in addition to being intrinsically valuable, has cognitive dimensions, or what
he calls "consequences." For instance, he quotes Goodman approvingly that art works are best "when by stimulating inquisitive looking, raising visual intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts, and marking off neglected significant kinds, they participate in the organization and reorganization of experience." This kind of effect Ralph calls 'prospective values,' presumably because he thinks of them as occurring after the aesthetic experience. It is not clear to me why he thinks this, because, at the same time, he wants to avoid calling them "instrumental." The reason for this is presumably that they are not really external to aesthetic experience. Rather they are aspects of the experience as it occurs, though of course they may persist after the experience is over. For this reason I think it is confusing to call them "prospective" and I find the value of this distinction difficult to explain. For Ralph, the value lies in that it allows him to insist that the "prospective" values are not what justify the importance of art education or determine its goals. It is the intrinsic, consummatory value of aesthetic experience that does that.

Talk About the Meanings of Artworks

I turn now to the idea that we should prefer talk about meaning to talk about the aesthetic. Approaches that support this idea (there are many variations) analyze our response to artworks as interpretation, as the construction of meanings rather than as the perception of qualities. They treat the interpretation of visual works of art in much the same way theorists have treated literary and other kinds of texts, appealing variously to hermeneutic, reader-response, reception, and intertextualist theories. Such theories accord a much more constructive role to the viewer and his or her cultural context. The meaning of the work is seen as constructed by the interaction of the viewer with the work. Meaning therefore depends in part on the particular viewer and/or the culture of the viewer. Hence it is not universal, the same for every viewer.

Of course, the notion of "meaning," especially as applied to artworks, is at least as complex and contested as the notion of the "aesthetic." But we can say that, on most accounts, meanings lie in connections. An artwork has meaning if it can be connected with something else — other artworks, ideas, and events — what in general can be called context. Because meaning consists in connections, it usually can be explicated, articulated for others. Connections can be indicated in words and they likely can be discussed, argued about, and organized deliberately. When they are discussed, they are discursively mediated rather than immediately grasped. In other words, they can be taught and learned in a way that looks very much like the way history, for example, is taught and learned.
Meaning in this sense is often contrasted with the aesthetic, which is perceived rather than being put into words, is directly grasped rather than discursively connected. Aesthetic qualities must be experienced and cannot really be taught and learned. And because they belong to the object itself, they do not in principle change with the viewer (though the viewer may see more or less of them). The aesthetic qualities of an object are the same for all to see. We recognize in this the contrast between knowing in art and knowing about art, in which Ralph sides assertively with knowing in art. I want to suggest, however, that we can find more continuity in this pair than is commonly acknowledged and that the two poles are not in such dramatic conflict as appears.

We have already seen suggestions of continuity between the directly grasped and the discursively constructed in the discussion of the importance of art history. Ralph always insisted that knowledge of art history can affect what we see in a work, a view that distinguished him from formalism. Moreover, as one’s knowledge of art history continues to develop, the qualities one grasps continue to deepen (that is, they become more intense, comprehensive, insightful, unified, and so on). That is to say that the grasp of aesthetic qualities is built up over time in a cyclical process of discursive learning and immediate grasping, where what is grasped responds each time to what is learned. In that case, the two are at least closely related and mutually dependent.

This becomes even more obvious when we consider works that require some specific contextual knowledge that comes not from art history but from culture more generally. Many artworks, including a lot of contemporary art, comment on social or political issues and require knowledge of social and political contexts. In many works what one needs to know cannot be taken for granted, even as part of a well-educated, art historical background. In these cases the meaning needs to be explained to the viewer or the work has little meaning.

I will cite a small example, a work of Mel Chin. It consists of two brand-new Nike basketball shoes that Chin has sliced and somehow fused together at the toes. The two shoes have become one solid object, making a shallow V-shaped object, obviously useless for the original purpose of the shoes. They retain much of their original glamour but because they are fused together give a sense of paradox, clumsiness. But without further knowledge of the context, most viewers would find the work simply puzzling.

Chin intends it as a comment on the marketing tactics of Nike and the social system that makes those tactics possible. Many youths in inner cities, wearing sneakers like these, dream of becoming basketball stars like Michael Jordan. For them, Nike basketball shoes are a symbol of a way out of difficult circumstances. Nike sells these dreams with glamorous and very expensive shoes. But the dreams are of course confusing, dysfunctional both
in their paradoxically expensive character and in distracting attention from the real social issues they arise from.

These meanings are not just comments on a social situation that can easily be conveyed in words. For the work has a markedly aesthetic character. The shoes retain their initial glitzy appeal and their fusion at the toes gives them a striking sense of awkwardness, of helpless immobility. In Ralph's language, we could say that the work has some intense aesthetic qualities that can be grasped in perception. In the alternative language of interpretation we could say that the work has meanings that are hard to define and more complex than can be put into words, for the words are just a discursive indication of what is presented non-discursively by Chin. But unless we have the words to help us build the connections, we are unlikely to see the work as meaningful. It will be perhaps provocative but in the end incoherent. Because the active processes of interpretation behind our response are so obvious, it seems easier to speak of understanding the work than of perceiving it, of grasping its meaning than its qualities.

These points apply in principle not only to works with the structure of metaphor like Mel Chin's or only to a certain kind of art. Picasso's Weeping Woman can equally be said to be meaningful and to require interpretation. As with the Chin piece, the meanings cannot be put exactly in words but one can indicate their nature discursively, largely by recalling contexts and suggesting connections. For example, the Weeping Woman is not only related to the Guernica, and the bombing of the village. It is also related to Picasso's other works and stylistic development; to the history of Spanish painting, especially the works of Goya; and to the many depictions of weeping mothers, including Mary weeping over Christ. It is also related to the history of Spain (the Weeping Woman is now in Madrid in the Museo Reina Sofia), to our attitudes toward the Spanish Civil War, and toward war in general.

It is important to see that this list could be extended indefinitely, though not perhaps forever, and that each addition changes in some way, however small, the meanings of the work. My point is that these meanings are in many ways very like aesthetic qualities. They must be grasped visually, as if they are part of the work, and they identify the same phenomena. It seems almost as if one can use the notions of aesthetic qualities and constructed meanings equivalently. I sometimes think we could say that meanings have aesthetic qualities and that aesthetic qualities are meaningful. The way in which we choose to speak depends, then, on a number of considerations. If we have in mind the end state sought by the viewer or desired by the educator, we might speak in terms of aesthetic qualities and of aesthetic experience. This is the goal, the final satisfying moment of response to the work in which the qualities are directly seen. If on the other hand we have in mind the mental activities involved in constructing a coherent response to a work,
that is, the kinds of connections a viewer might make and the discursive processes involved, we might speak of constructing its meanings.

The choice might depend, too, on the particular artwork and the viewer. It seems natural, for example, to speak of Pamela’s response to the Picasso in terms of aesthetic qualities because those qualities are so striking and immediate to her. In that case, the process of interpretation is less obvious and appears not to take time. This is not so, however, with the case of Janet’s response to the same work. And with the Chin, most people, I suspect, are not already aware of the references made by the work and therefore require some explanation before the work is meaningful for them. In that case, it seems better to speak in terms of constructing meanings.

The sense that the two ways of talking about the response to artworks are equivalent is enhanced when we dwell on the time taken by that response. We have already seen that the visual grasp of qualities is not “immediate” in the sense of not being mediated by discursive knowledge. It is also not immediate in the temporal sense, a matter of instant recognition. Responding to a work takes time because it requires a type of inquiry in which one looks closely at it, grasps some things quickly, explores their connections with other items, checks out possible further connections in light of what is seen in the work and of what is already known, grasps some further things; and so on. This is a cyclical kind of relational thinking that may be sustained over considerable time. In other words, response involves a kind of thinking as well as of looking, seeks connections, moves through successive integrations and perhaps disintegrations, and contains both discursive movements and direct graspings. In this process there are sometimes intermediate stages in which one understands some of the context and grasps some of the qualities but is also aware that there are further relationships to be recognized and other qualities to be seen. In principle, we are always in this situation. We never grasp everything there is in an artwork, certainly not in major ones. There is always the possibility of seeing more and a great work is different each time we come to it.

Ralph would not disagree with the tenor of these remarks, I believe. But I see them, as he does not, as suggesting that there is considerable overlap between what Ralph, and the traditional rhetoric, sees as a dichotomy. To insist that we must choose in a permanent way between talk about the aesthetic and talk about meaning seems unhelpful. If the response to art consists of alternating moments of direct grasping and discursive inquiry, it is hard to see grounds for privileging one phase above the other. Neither one would be valuable without the other. When separated, knowledge about images would be dead information and the direct grasp of qualities would be superficial. My conclusion so far is that one can move rather easily between talking about the qualities and the meanings of artworks and that the choice should depend more on context and purpose than on ideology.
Are the Two Ways of Talking Compatible in Practice?

But we usually make the choice between these two ways of talking on grounds of theory, not of convenience. For these are not just ways of talking. They represent different epistemological views and perhaps the theoretical differences have significantly different consequences for art education. I think the relevant theoretical differences can be summarized in two ways. One has to do with the location of qualities/meanings; the other with the relevance of context.

Talk about aesthetic qualities presumes that the qualities actually belong to the work. They are not only experienced as belonging to the work but also are thought objectively to belong to it. What we grasp, well or poorly, is objectively there to be grasped. This is true even in Eaton’s version, in which only people who are educated in a particular art tradition can grasp them. Ralph agreed with this view, for the notion that the viewer needs to be appropriately prepared is what gives purpose to art education. But on this view there is always an ideal viewer, ideally prepared and situated to perceive the work, who is the reference for deciding what qualities are actually there. The ideal viewer is not an actual person but is nevertheless important because the idea allows us to speak of the correctness of response. If the qualities are actually there as part of the work, then they can be seen by the ideal viewer; and our responses will be more accurate and complete as they approximate that of the ideal viewer. While we may never know fully what the ideal viewer would see, we can discuss a work with the aim of reaching agreement, giving each other objective reasons for our opinions, and getting closer to that of the ideal viewer.

This has important educational consequences. One is that it allows educators to engage students in discussion about works, in which they use the skills and contents of art history and criticism, and of aesthetics, with the purpose of seeing the works’ qualities more fully, and so developing aesthetic percipience. Ralph saw this as a very important practice.

The hermeneutic view, in contrast, locates the meaning of works in the interactions *between* the viewer and the works, rather than *in* the works themselves. On this account both the work and the viewer affect the interaction, and hence the meaning. It follows that the meaning of a work is not the same for everyone. If viewers are sufficiently different, the meanings they create will be different too. This allows for multiple readings of one work and no reasonable way of saying that one is better than the other. For example, we might say that the meanings of the *Weeping Woman* might be different if it were seen or created at a different time. Seen or produced in another tradition, it would have different meanings, and also seen or produced by someone in the same tradition at a different time. Produced earlier, it would be unintelligible; later, it would be imitation.
Yet I do not think this view need mean a serious practical relativity of judgment. It does not mean in practice that we cannot call some interpretations better than others. For on most accounts the viewer acts not so much as a unique individual as a member of a culture, or an interpretive community. Within a culture, the members share a background of reference, a tradition of art, a set of interpretive expectations. These are what primarily determine the viewer's contribution to the interaction with the image and therefore different members of the same culture tend to construct similar interpretations of the same work. The result is that within interpretive communities we can still discuss the meanings of a work, offer reasons for interpretations, and in the process come to see the image more richly. The proviso is that we always realize that our reasons are only good, and the meanings shareable, within the interpretive community. This does not exclude the possibility of there being several reasonable interpretations of one work, or of a work being ambiguous. But it does mean that we can (within an interpretive community) offer reasons for interpretations and in doing so help each other. The reader will notice similarities of this account with Eaton's. The implication is that there is no need to disagree with Ralph's practical proposals for teaching.

The second theoretical difference has to do with the influence of context on the response to artworks. This idea was not news to Ralph. After all, he emphasized the study of art history, which is the study of the context of the creation of artworks. And the context of making cannot be held separate from the context of interpretation, since the historical context must also be reconstructed by the viewer in the present. So Ralph agreed that responses are influenced by the viewers' present context, which includes their knowledge base, expectations, values, all of them structured by their present culture. But he tended to interpret the cultural context in terms of the knowledge and values of the artworld. This defined the task of art education for him; it is to build the viewers' knowledge and values to accord more with those of the artworld.

A different view is that the context in which most students live is not easily influenced by the staples of art history and criticism. That context is dominated by the flood of visual images and texts that we call "visual culture," and it is not conducive to the values that Ralph championed. Our popular visual culture does not tend to promote a detached, knowledgeable, critical and contemplative response. It carries a different set of values and is very powerful. It influences especially young people in our culture, teaching them what to look for, what is worth valuing, what kind of person they are, perhaps shaping their very identity. It certainly influences how students respond to artworks. On this view, then, art educators need to pay attention to visual culture and find a way somehow to deal with its less desirable influences. They should teach students how commercial images are
made and for what purposes, to be aware of their biases, to adopt a critical attitude. And the criticism should address in part the inherent motivations and messages of popular culture, which have to do with gender, race, commodification, the environment, and so on.

The argument is that unless we address our popular visual culture in an explicit way, the context in which students encounter art is too powerful to allow most of them to model on the artworld. One cannot expect the standard art curriculum to outweigh the influence of our visual culture. So it is not enough to ignore it and to study only artworks of excellence. I do not think the conclusion of this argument is that as art educators we should abandon artworks of excellence and teach only about visual culture. That would be to turn art education into cultural studies. The conclusion is rather that we should find ways of assimilating elements of the popular visual culture into the art classroom and into some sort of dialog with major artworks.

Ralph rejected this argument and its direction. He did not agree that art educators should include aspects of visual culture in their teaching. Commercial images may have aesthetic qualities, he argued, but they are trivial compared with those of major artworks, and instructional time is too short to spend it on trivial things. It appears that he did not take seriously the argument suggested above: that our students live in the midst of an enormously powerful and popular visual culture that outweighs the influence of a traditional art education. He thought rather that a proper grounding in art history and art criticism could be more influential. It is not clear, in the end, whether this is because he did not have the same estimation of the character and power of popular visual culture or because he did not accept the theoretical insistence on the importance of the viewer's context. Either way, this does make for a genuine difference about practice. It underlies an important debate in our field, a debate, as I said earlier, that often appears more like a conflict than a dialog.

I find myself, however, unable to side decisively with either practical view. I am interested more in developing intermediate positions. I think we must not give up on the values of the artworld, yet we cannot ignore the popular culture. We have not yet had enough discussion of these issues, nor have we experimented enough with alternative practices. I believe we can find continuing value in wrestling with Ralph's arguments on this topic.

NOTES
1. Ralph Smith, Excellence II: The Continuing Quest in Art Education (Reston, Va.: The National Art Education Association, 1995), 57. This is a relatively current and comprehensive summary of his views on the topic of this essay.
2. Ibid, 28.

4. Ibid., 106.


8. Ibid., 75.

9. The issue is important because it bears on the current, perennial debate about whether art education has cognitive or other consequences and whether these should be taken into account by art education. See Elliott Eisner, "Does Experience in the Arts Boost Academic Performance?" *Art Education* 51, no. 1 (January 1998): 7-15.