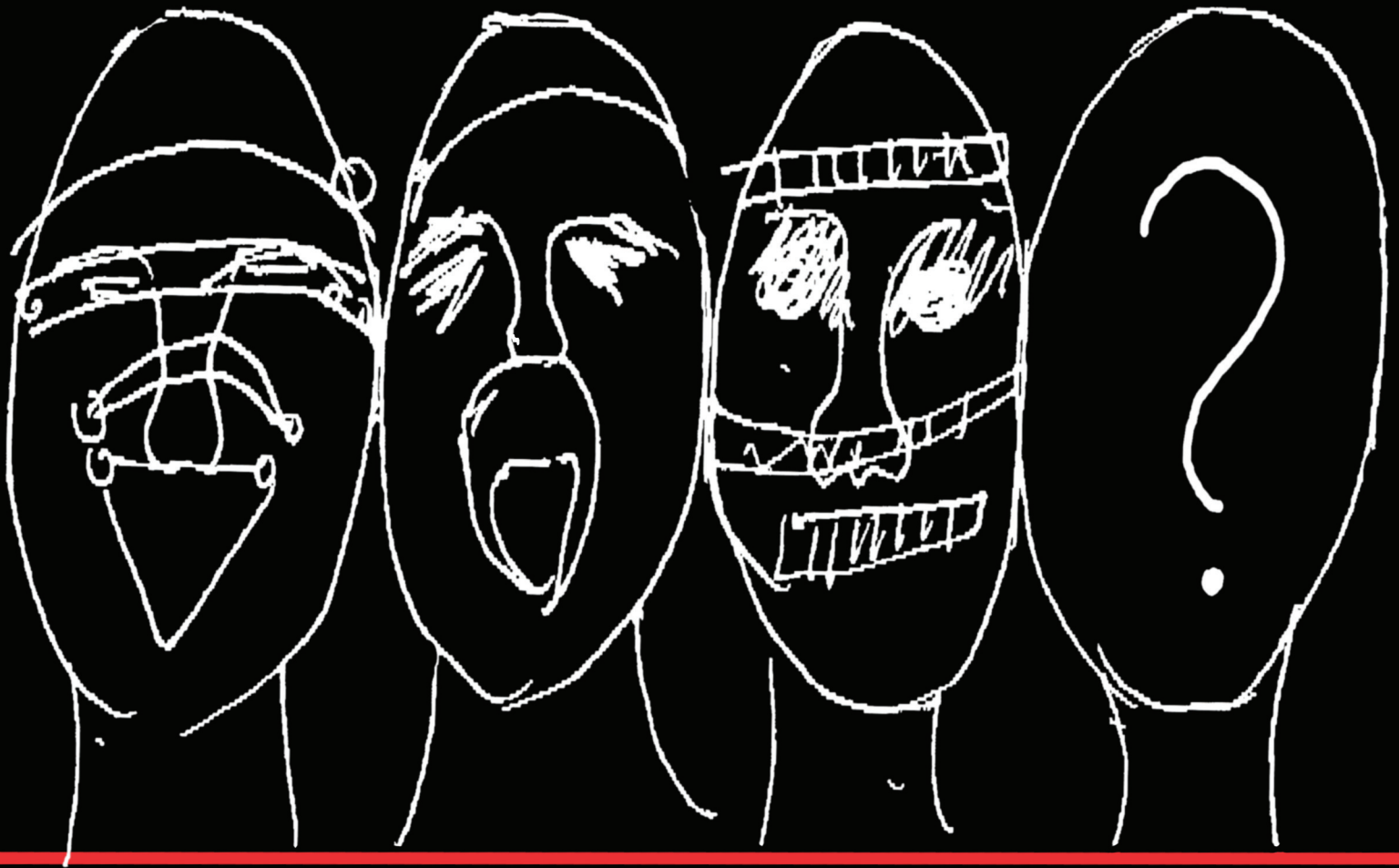# Postmodern Dilemmas: Outrageous Essays in Art&Art Education

jan jagodzinski

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STUDIES IN CURRICULUM THEORY

William F. Pinar, Series Editor

Postmodern Dilemmas: Outrageous Essays in Art&Art Education

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This volume
is dedicated to a small circle of friends I first met in New York in 1980
where the Caucus on Social Theory & Art Education met as the Salon des Refusé.

Arthur Guagliumi
Dan Nadaner
Elleda Katan
Herb Perr
Robert Bersson
Peter Purdue

but no less at a later date

Amy Brook Snider
Ellen Kotz
Harold Pearse
Pamela Siskind
Artha Kass
Andra Johnson
Cathy Brooks
Robyn Turner
Tom Anderson
Laurie Hicks
Doug Blandy
Kristin Congdon
Kerry Freeman
Robert Saunders
Mike Emme
Victoria Smolyk
Karen Hamblen
Mary Stokrocki
Gayle Weitz
Rosalie Politsky
Deborah Smith-Shank
Ed Check
Charles Wieder
Connie Landis

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PRE
FACE

The sense of outrage belongs somewhere at the limit of the frame, in the sublime, perhaps in the nonrational, for it signifies an almost unbearable desire, an uncontrollable temper, a body which cannot be contained in any sedate and normal way in order to be heard. This is the writing of a male *hysteric* wanting his own lack to be filled by an unattainable desire for recognition. Unable to do so, it becomes a writing machine . . . endlessly, incessantly producing in the hope of a hearing. These volumes chart this outrageous desire that has been experienced over the past decade or so, since coming into a field whose hybrid space is marginalized between art and education, often belonging to neither one, nor the other comfortably. Part of my title—art&art education—indicates this difficulty. The functioning of the ampersand "&" as a category (cf. Žižek, 1996:103) "*splits up* the ambiguous starting unity" of either art or education. Art education, as I use the term throughout these two volumes, includes both the teaching of art in postsecondary institutions as well as in public schools. Sometimes art education is housed in the department of fine arts, and sometimes it finds itself entirely within an education faculty. Its ambiguous location repeats the necessity of including "&" in my titles—a logics of both/and. These essays are my signposts—various markers of my journey in trying to understand what this phenomenon "postmodernity" is, and how it informs my chosen field.

There is an anger that runs through some of these essays which is often excluded from polite academic discourse. Outrage is, after all, a parading, an exaggeration; often polemical in its dress, it is directed at specific relationships and situations which offer no escape. Much of my anger stems from a feeling of frustration and exclusion from being unable to shape visual art education toward a more radical and critical perspective, given that the dominant mood of art&art education has embraced a neo-conservative curricula agenda like Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE), echoing neo-conservative cultural critics such as E. D. Hirsh, Jr., and the late Alan Bloom. Reception of postmodernism into art education has succumbed to more clever ways of recycling the Western artistic canon through the pastiche of artistic styles, and yet more clever ways to contain and absorb the "difference" that threatened to decenter it—namely the challenge offered by feminist and queer artists, artists of the First Nations (indigenous peoples) and the Diaspora, as well as the heterogeneous popular culture of a youth that is decidedly at odds with the salient art of its canon. Discipline Based Art Education, feeling at least some pressure from its Other, has metamorphosed into a more benevolent benefactor of the arts; "difference" is now given more rhetorical space. However, the "backlash" against feminism, which the journalist Susan Faludi (1991) described several years ago, applies equally well to the "backlash" against a conservative agenda in the arts and education. I have tried throughout these essays to articulate a position that differentiates itself from the legacy of the racist, patriarchal, and capitalist developments of the humanist Enlightenment tradition, and

the more conservative developments in postmodernism which recuperate that tradition. This is my "Other." It is a central theme that runs throughout these volumes.

The contestory polemical style of some of these essays is intentional, for it violates the ruling academy's rejection of polemics as the "Other" of scholarship which observes polite rules of objectivity and debate. I have embodied both figuratively, in the play of the language itself, and literally as much passion as I could muster to push back what I take to be an oppressive and outdated foundation for the teaching of art. Passion and anger are, after all, close cousins. The relationship of postmodernism and art education remains uneasy. On the whole, art education is not responding to the changed media environment. Popular culture and the reorientations of theory (poststructuralism, deconstruction, media education) necessary for a better understanding of an electronic culture, and the youth who use it, are a long way off. Studio arts predominate in the schools. Fine arts courses remain traditional while media education cannot find a permanent home in the curriculum. Computer art is often a question of learning software programs and the skills involved—little else.

The following essays explore the uneasiness, tensions, and frustrations I found myself faced with; experiencing art education caught in a time-warp in relation to the broader questions which were raised about the changed understanding of representation. The recent questioning of modernism and the project of humanism have left art education in a hiatus. Recent trends in art education in the English-speaking countries of Canada, United States, Australia, and England have been reactionary. The best known of these conserving reactions has been Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) supported by the Getty Center for Education, situated in Santa Monica, California, whose program they characterize as providing a "back to the future" mentality. This phrase, which mimics a well-known film series of the same name, identifies the very complexity that the word "post" in postmodern suggests: the tension between modernism and postmodernism which so many authors have identified. DBAE's nostalgia is one such response. This nostalgia for a "restoration" of a center is a theme which I visit and re-visit throughout these two volumes. For Agnes Heller and Ferenc Fehér "[p]ostmodernity is neither a historical period nor a cultural or political trend with well-defined characteristics. Rather, postmodernity may be understood as the private-collective time and space, within the wider time and space of modernity, delineated by those who have problems with and queries addressed to modernity, and by those who make an inventory of modernity's achievement as well as its unresolved *dilemmas*" (1988:1, my emphasis). "Dilemmas" presents the operative word in the struggles to ground a renewed self-identity in a world whose borders are quickly changing. Dilemmas characterizes my own "ludic," and most likely, over-romanticized resistance to the dominant visual art discourse. It can be appropriately described as "pun(k)deconstruction," a neologism coined by Zavarzadeh (1992) disparagingly, I must add, to identify the political poverty of deconstruction; a position with which I disagree. Consequently, I have appropriated this neologism, modified as two words, in the title of the second volume.

Along with outrage and passion, there is therefore a certain unavoidable "violence" that must be identified in these essays. I wish it were possible to say that "violence" was not necessary for change, but I don't believe it. The descriptors of struggle, oppression, debate, standing up for one's rights, pointing to injustices are all "violent acts." Ethical and political acts do not escape "violence." Readers will have to judge for themselves whether my acts of "violence" have been justifiable. Throughout these two volumes it will become apparent that there is a sub-text of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. The strategy of mobilizing a psychoanalytic discourse is nothing short of attacking the very Imaginary that sustains the edifice of art&art education which is a history of the "optical unconscious." The attack is on the "object *a*" that sustains my racist, patriarchal, and capitalist Other. It is an attempt to ruin that fantasy and displace its authority with a trajectory to a more inclusive Imaginary. In this regard, these two volumes are "architectonic" attempts to sustain a critique which opens up the space of "other" possibilities.

In order to do this, in *some* of these essays I have attempted to dwell in the nonrepresentational space of the sublime, especially in the second volume. Some essays are "excessive"; perhaps not to

the degree of say, Arthur Kroker, nevertheless, some are extremely "dark." Because of the possible charge of nihilism, raised often by conservative critics of the postmodern, a brief response needs to be made. Pauline Marie Rosenau (1992:15–16) presents, for me, an uncomfortable division between what she calls "skeptical post-modernists" and "affirmative post-modernists." The former are inspired by Continental European philosophies (e.g., Nietzsche and Heidegger), offering "a pessimistic, negative, gloomy assessment." They "argue that the post-modern age is one of fragmentation, disintegration, malaise, meaninglessness, a vagueness or even absence of moral parameters and social chaos." In contrast, the latter agree with the skeptical post-modernists' critique of modernity, yet they have a "more hopeful, optimistic view of the post-modern age. More indigenous to Anglo-North American culture than to the Continent, the generally optimistic affirmatives are oriented toward process. They are either open to positive political action (struggle and resistance) or content with the recognition of visionary, celebratory personal nondogmatic projects that range from New Age religion to New Wave life-styles and include a whole spectrum of post-modern social movements."

First, I would like to think that these essays breach both of these either/or positions. To begin with they were written on two continents: North America (Canada and the U.S.) and Europe (Klagenfurt, Austria, and Germany). As a subject "in process" there were/are times when entering the space of the sublime was/is necessary to push back the "cult of beauty" and commodification that sends the body into the excesses of the aesthetic. Sometimes it requires the excesses of opposition to clear enough space for differentiation. Second, Nietzsche identified two sorts of decadence which have a direct bearing on the charges of nihilism. One is an unselfconscious decadence—the decadence of the performative liar who deceives by imitating truth. We might think of the technophile who offers the utopia of global capitalism as the solution for all our ills, or the moralist of the New conservatism whose mode of conventional morality is really a sickness masquerading as health which produces "resentment"; a "resentment" which says we must reluctantly support those who are lazy and just living off social benefits; a "resentment" which attacks youth cultures of color, the poor, the unemployed, and the immigrants escaping from the Bosnian war or the poverty in Russia for their lack of self-sufficiency and fortitude. But Nietzsche saw a more positive form of decadence as well—what might called a "singularity" that many artists struggle toward today. Such decadence is a self-conscious awareness of the fictionalizing powers which will prevent an acceptance of another's fictionalized "will-to-power" as *the* collected validity and truth which, today, is being offered to us as the mythic utopianism of virtual reality by a "virtual class" (Kroker & Weinstein, 1994). If there is no utopian whole, and no omniscient point of Truth, it is better to self-consciously construct one's own provisional fiction, and consciously reshape anarchy without falling into the decadent principle of hyper-individuation—the worst form of arrogance and self-conceit, to become a kind of "Unibomber of the Mind." Perhaps critical hyper-subjectivity can be heightened to a point where it dissolves itself into its opposite—*responsible* social anarchy?

To align myself, at times, with the dark-sublime side of Rosenau's binary I have followed the strategy of Lyotard with interest. Lyotard, himself an artist–critic, has identified the play of the *figure* (1971) as a possible strategy of deconstruction. How might it be possible to present the "visible" as a figural force in writing so that it acts obliquely, anamorphically? Modernist culture signifies largely in a discursive way while postmodernist signification is *figural.* While the discursive give priority to words over images, its sensibility is that of the ego rather than the id (*Es*). The figural, in contrast, is a visual rather than a literal sensibility. "It contests rationalist and/or 'didactic' views of culture; it asks not what a cultural text 'means' but what it 'does' " (Sarap, 1993:168). To follow the writings of such figures of the postmodern landscape as Lyotard, Baudrillard and Žižek is to develop a skewed or "paranoiac perspective" (Flieger, 1996).

Lyotard's characterization of the "figural" is admirably succinct and identifies yet another level of the intent of the following essays, for each is a question and a query concerning the tension between modernity/postmodernity. Lyotard argues in *Discours,figure* that the graphic (plastic) function of the line is seen rather than read; it functions by an appeal to corporeal resonance rather

than to the code marked out by a discourse; it is a figure on a ground rather than an arbitrary mark. Taking my clue from Lyotard I have attempted to write several essays, especially in the second volume, putting the "figural" in motion. Some are outrageously written, over-exaggerated, excessive in their intent—examples of graphic hyperbolic writing. Others are "experifigural" essays, performances staged to get at the incommensurate clash of heterogeneous plastic and graphic spaces. These have been influenced by Conceptualism, which conflated art and language on each other to produce a "scripto-visual" tradition. Conceptualist Art emerged at the very time that art education began its retreat to more conservative positions. These particular essays are therefore written in a purposefully playful and satirical style, playing visually with the format of presentation. In some cases the type "face" has been manipulated so as to recognize and underscore the graphic element involved in writing and to distinguish voices. This visual trope (Lyotard's *figure*), in and of itself, questions the claim that language is transparent in its representation. The graphic dimensions of language, made possible by the word processor, make the reader aware that design and form are very much at work in presentment of rhetoric.

To align myself with the "affirmative" side of postmodernism—but not its capitalist virtual utopia that is promised—the reader will find in the first volume at least four attempts at articulating a new trajectory for ar&art education. These are optimistic and hopeful directions, offered as "texts" after a long and (sometimes) arduous critique of the "pretexts" that shape the current discursive reality. Throughout the two volumes the recovery of the memory of *history* is always hard at work—incessantly so. The question of the *simulacrum* of the signifier is constantly raised so that the charges of nominalism and nihilism might be deflected.

Structure of the Volumes

The intent of ensembled essays is not to offer some outright "solution" to these changed times; that would be too absurd, rather they are written to raise awareness as to the "condition" art&art education finds itself in today. These essays chart a certain redundancy of themes: the central one being to highlight the inadequacy of art&art education based on modernist tenets. Another major theme has been to raise the question of gender throughout. In these volumes the sex/gendering of the fine arts tradition is raised in order to show its exclusions. To achieve these ends the history of fine art since the Enlightenment is charted several times from different perspectives. Immanuel Kant remains a central figure in many of these historical sweeps. In many essays this historical turn, again and again, is first reconstructed through the strategy of a *pretext*, so that it may then be deconstructed as *text* in the hope that a new possibility may emerge anamorphically. Questioning what is postmodernity and its relation to art&art education is a strong theme throughout these two volumes. I argue that art&art education should make its way to the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies rather than continue to confine itself to the fine arts tradition as a "discipline." Youth and popular culture, therefore, "figure" prominently. Another major theme has been to raise the question of gender and the racial "Other" in the fine arts. The gendering of the fine arts tradition and the management of the "Other" through neo-racist forms is raised throughout the two volumes.

Postmodern Dilemmas: Outrageous Essays in Art&Art Education's task is to present a critique of art&art education by interrelating three fields: fine arts, education, and art education. I have divided the essays into two sections: *Art Education in a Postmodern Age* and *Talking Back.* The first three essays of the first section provide the historical background between the modern and postmodern moment. I begin with an introductory essay, "Between Apocalypse and Utopia," first written in 1986 and then published in 1992. In 1986 a rather apocalyptic and nihilistic mood prevailed. As has often been argued, the Thatcher, Reagan–Bush, Mulroney years ushered in a new conservatism, hence this essay sketches a rather bleak picture. "Panic" education (cf. Kroker et al., 1989) seems

to be an apt hyperbole here. This essay has been reworked, and added to over the years, to its present state (1996). It provides the backdrop for the various developments presented throughout these volumes.

I follow this with, "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing/ A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing: Questioning The Fine Arts in Our Schools. What's So Fine About It?" This essay first appeared in 1989 in a local arts journal, *FINE*. Here I present the politics of postmodernity at the micro-lived level. The dilemma of postmodernity is presented in art education by examining my position as a member of the Fine Arts Council in Alberta, Canada, whose mandate is the promotion of the arts in Alberta schools based on a fine arts tradition. The historical backdrop of postmodernism is presented and then four art educational responses to it are outlined. The reader is left with the possibility that deconstruction may be one of the most powerful responses available today, but how one interprets what exactly "deconstruction" means remains problematical. In this regard, Linda Hutcheon (1989:3) has drawn on Barthes' notion that postmodernist art attempts at "de-doxification." "Postmodern art cannot but be political, at least in the sense that its representations—its images and stories—are anything but neutral, however 'aestheticized' they may appear to be in their parodic self-reflexivity. While the postmodern has no effective theory of agency that enables a move into political *action*, it does work to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of a de-naturalizing critique." In this sense, this essay attempts to "de-doxify" visual art education, and gropes for an ethico-political direction.

"From the Palette to the Palate: Deconstructing the Consumerism of Art Education In an Age of Postmodernity" (1984) comes next. This essay was the earliest attempt to outline the current debates concerning representation by philosophers and critics of art as they relate to art&art education. It fulfills some of the promise that the former essay leaves with the reader. This essay covers some of the major issues and dilemmas of postmodernism. The following list of headings is indicative of these concerns: Anti-Presence, Anti-Representation, Anti-Mimesis; The Death of the Artist/Author and the Birth of the Big Boy Burger; From the Authenticity of the Artistic Signature to Artistic Discourse; The Electronic Media of Postmodernism: The End of Art?; Turning the Senses Inside Out: The "K(night)'s" Move of the Body Doubled: Anti-Aesthetic and Anti-Commodity Impulses of Postmodernism; Allegory and Symbol in Postmodernism: The Return of the Double; The Last Stranglehold of Humanism: Piaget and the Development of Mind. It ends with the earliest projection of what might a postmodernist art education be like given these concerns.

Talking Back, section two, has two longer essays. On the promise of deconstruction in the "Wolf" essay, I provide a critique of Ralph Smith's *Excellence in Art Education* (1988), a classical defense of humanist art education: "A Para/critical/sitical/sightical Reading of Ralph Smith's *Excellence in Art Education*." My essay is a close reading of his arguments. It is a satirically vicious attack, and perhaps too hard hitting in its intent; definitely an example of pun(k)deconstruction but it is closer to "puke deconstruction," which forms an essay in the second volume since this essay is intentionally written in "Bad Taste" (cf. John Waters). It is based on what I call "Bad Theater," a performance that took place in 1987 at the annual National Art Education Association meeting in Washington, D.C. This essay tries to undermine the notion of "excellence" in art education by pointing to the phallocentric bias of modernist art educational aesthetics. In one sense the essay collapses on itself for it too is a phallocentric power play which functions to gratify its author (me!). Although "i" make no apologies for this, it perhaps is part of a "ludic" form of resistance as well; it vivifies again the outrageousness of my discourse. The typography says this throughout. Ralph Smith becomes a bloated, distorted cartoon, while "i" claim the authority of the self-consciously/righteously humble self. The fragment Ralph Smith becomes a fetish to be used in a sadistic ritual designed to construct "i" as a sympathetic "Other." This is one possible reading, but an important one I believe since it points to a territory which is "over the edge" of respectability. But this is not the whole story for there is a map of new possibilities. The essay ends with a ten-fold proposal for visual art education, the second attempt to articulate a critical postmodern art education.

The next essay, "Re-Writing The A.I.M. Statement: A Sustained Essay on Art Education in a Postmodern Society," is by far the longest. It is an attempt to raise important issues surrounding art&art education by reading the intertextualites surrounding one "fragment": Edmund Feldman's AIM (Art in the Mainstream) statement was written in 1982 as an unobtrusive, self-evident statement that defined the goals of the field—even today. The *pretext* to the essay is presented as a *mimesis* of Feldman's article as it first appeared in the journal *Art Education*. I attempt to re-write the AIM statement with postmodernity in mind, with an awareness that we are living in an electronic culture which requires a different approach to art education. I propose a new AIM statement: art means text as a negotiated textual-image, art means cultural representation, as made evident through the rhetoric of its media and modes of address, and art means ideology, as exemplified through its discursive formations. This is the third attempt to articulate a new trajectory for art&art education.

The last essay, "Reconfigurations of Kant: The Supplement of the Sublime, or Should Art Education Liberate Itself from the Idea of the Aesthetic?" (1996), is a meditation on Kant's aesthetics (and Schiller) which is central to the artistic practice of art&art education. For critical theorists like Habermas, Kant still remains the "anchor" for the unfinished task of modernity. I approach Kant from a number of diacritical positions: Schiller with Foucault; Kant with Foucault; Kant with de Man and Miller; "Kant with Sade"; Kant with Derrida. The essay ends with the fourth refinement of what postmodern art&art education might look like.

I hope the reader comes away with the sense of commitment toward the renewal and change that are possible for art&art education. At the same time, I hope this conviction is based on a historical remembering of how we have come to live in times which present us with the extremes of apocalypse and utopia. For these extreme times I believe an extreme form of "experifigural writing" remains necessary.

SECTION I

Art

Art Education
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Introduction:
Between *Apocalypse* and *Utopia*

Apocalypse means the end of ends, i.e., the difficulty of writing during a time of the "already said."

Utopian means a universality without its symptom, i.e., without the point of exception that functions as its internal negation.

The whole secret lies in arbitrariness. People usually think it easy to be arbitrary, but it requires much study to succeed in being arbitrary so as not to lose oneself in it, but so as to derive satisfaction from it. One does not enjoy the immediate but something quite different which he arbitrarily imports into it. You go to see the middle of the play, you read the part of a book. By this means you insure yourself a very different kind of enjoyment from that which the author has been so kind as to plan for you. (Kierkegaard, 1944: 295)

Pretext

I am drowning in my sorrow
thoughts of past and of tomorrow
Nothing's ever real to me
this can't be reality.
Drowning in a pool of lies
Blocks the vision from my eyes
Darkness is a friend of mine
Together in this neutral time.
I am stuck inside of me
Never let to be set free
Wasting just to waist away
Same thing day after day
Pain is still all that I feel
The one thing that still is real
The past now be ahead
For all my selves are good as dead.
(Jeremy Jagodzinski, "Neutral Meaningless," from *ProClone* demo tape, 1996)

Sublimely Disciplined Classrooms[1]

A great deal of schooling is characterized by the mundane life. (*No. Boredom.*) This mundaneness is not informed by a state of ennui, rather it is, as Philip Jackson (1968) had described, a place where something is *always* happening. (*Call it speed. Call it intensification. Call it burnout.*) The speed and the number of quick decisions a teacher must make during the course of a day can be exhaustive. Jackson, writing in the '60s, was describing conditions which compared to today seem rather tame. Progressive education still believed that it was possible to steer children's lives—to give them advice and a sense of the future with the teacher as their guiding light. (*What do you tell them today? No jobs. No future. No certainty.*) Massive curriculum changes in the United States were under way, especially in science education, to offset Russia's edge in the "space race." Times have changed. In the politics of popular memory, "1968" marked a significant point of radical student politics which has been contested through a pervasive retro/nostalgia/recycled aesthetic ever since by a New Right that has managed to create a climate of disillusionment and disenchantment with the utopian ideals of the '60s and '70s (Mercer, 1992). (*The Newt Gingrich and Hilton Kramer era rules.*)

Twenty years later, given the burden of "discipline," which often demands that students still their bodies in order to learn (*an old print-culture idea*), school life at times becomes absurd. (*An exemplar, please!*) *Time* (Jan. 1988) ran a special on the state of education in inner-city schools. Profiled was Joe Clark (*wasn't he the former prime minister of Canada?*), the principal of a Paterson, NJ, inner-city school who holds law and order using a bullhorn and baseball bat. His picture with the said items appeared on the cover of *Time*. So popular was his story, Joe Clark's fame eventually became immortalized as a Hollywood movie, *Stand By Me*. (*You mean to tell me Joe Clark morphed into Morgan Freeman, a Black American!*) Its rhetorical message was clear enough: Gone were the '60s when teachers were still respected and the kids were juiced up on knowledge. The new reality required a "get tough" policy. The kids now were on cocaine, drug dealing, coping with early pregnancy and the threat of AIDS. Gangs and gang killing were part of the school's inner-city life. Principals and the teachers had to use *extreme* methods to achieve results. (*So that's the reason for the bat and bullhorn, huh!*) Joe Clark's

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[1]Some parts of this essay appeared in "The Inherited Legacy: Art Education in a Postmodern Age (1986)," *Arts and Learning Research: The Journal of the Arts and Learning Special Interest Group*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1991): 54–78.

counterpart, the math teacher Escalantes of *Stand and Deliver* fame, was so successful at this task (viewers are led to believe), that the examination board refused to believe the results of his students' final exam scores. They were required to retake the math exam "to prove their innocence" of not having cheated. So powerful was the story's rhetoric that Ronald Reagan claimed *Stand and Deliver* was his favorite film. (*I'm not surprised. I bet Nancy liked it too!*) It represented all the "right" values if education was to get back on track again. But Hollywood wasn't finished here. That was the end of the '80s. An accused had to be found for America's chronic symptoms. Someone had to be stereotyped, "fingered," a profile documented for doing all the evil. In '90s America (*Hey, I'm from Canada!*) the accused has become the Black male. (*I see, Mike Tyson—for rape; O. J. Simpson—for murder; Michael Jackson—for pederasty.*) Hollywood film and television culture present him as a figure of "true" evil: the urban gangsta rapper, dealing in drugs, violence, and sex. (*Real trash, huh!*) Movies like *Boyz N the Hood*, *Menace II Society*, *Juice*, *Just Cause*, even *Clockers*, "button down" this image so that he can't move. The celluloid images blur with real life as these representations of race and violence reverberate through the news media spectacularizing the pain, hysteria, and gore. (*So that's why Canadians stopped traveling to Florida!*) Sister Souljah raps, "The Final Solution, Slavery's Back in Effect," an apocalyptic vision where Blacks have been ordered to report to designated camps. Slavery *is* back in effect. But is rap the cause or just the symptom of an American society divided by conflicts between races, classes, and sexes?

And so it goes, the rhetoric which surrounds such master signifiers as "extreme" and "excellence" has found purchase for those who fear the collapse of the school's primary mandate, namely, to socialize its youth into the dominant mores of society. (*To discipline.*) Since the advent of modern education in the 19th century, the term *in loco parentis* required that the institution of schooling carry out the wishes of the state (Miller, 1995). Now, perhaps more than ever, the school curricula which constitute "*in loco parentis*" are being questioned. Hollywood's representation of the "trouble" in schools and fingering Black youth as rapists and dangerous criminals is symptomatic of a larger "moral panic" that appears to be sweeping across all the modern nation-states as youth cultures seem uncontrollable and impossible to manage.[2] (*Hey, weren't you a teenager too?*)

The arts in our schools are in trouble as well. I saw *Mr. Holland's Opus* the other night. I cried. (*You cry?*) This was a movie about the career of a music teacher, a certain Mr. Holland (Richard Dreyfus) who taught in a high school appropriately named to make the movie's message clear: J. F. Kennedy High was founded during the presidential time of community and concern for the well-being of students. This was middle-class America with its hopes for a prosperous future. It was so obviously sentimental and saturated with nostalgia that I fell for it. How could I not identify with his struggles? (*You're getting old, too, huh?*) Just substitute art for music and I was there—on the screen. It pulled at all the right heartstrings: the desire Mr. Holland had to impart a love of music to his students; as a young teacher, the struggles Mr. Holland had in finding a way to reach the kids—to bridge the gap between popular music and the classical music he had to teach them in music appreciation class; the success he had with several students whom he really "turned on to music"; the contradictions of not being able to compose his own music because there was never enough time as a committed teacher; the devotion he had to his school, and the toll that commitment had on his family; the irony of having a deaf son, and hence the fear all arts teachers have in failing to impart a love of their art to their own children; and, finally, for Mr. Holland—at least—a time to retire and be recognized for being the "local hero" that he was. His self-sacrifice was acknowledged and witnessed by all those that he "touched" over the years. Mr. Holland's "Opus" is an allegory of the rise and decline of the arts in American schools. His Opus was his last "hurrah." (*Wow, that's real sentimental gook! How could you stomach it? It's about time he retired!*)

You're right, it's time he *should* retire?

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[2] I take this theme up in Volume 2, *Pun(k) Deconstruction: Experifigural Writings in Art&Art Education*, especially in the essay "Violence and Generation X: How the New Right Is Managing the 'Moral Panic' Through Television and Teen Films."

It's also time to stop the heckling voice. Almost every teacher has experienced, in one form or another, such insistent interruptions during teaching. By and large what happens in the classroom is supposed to be repetitive and rational to insure the transference of material. As has been well documented, the primary task of schooling has always been to socialize students into the accepted dominant values of the social order (Katz, 1968, 1971; Spring, 1968, 1972; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Discipline with its multiplicity of meanings (e.g., a well-defined body of knowledge, abeyance to an external authority, ability to delay gratification, self-control of the body) has, since the 18th century, informed the discourse of education (Foucault, 1977/1975) despite the recognition amongst educators themselves that it requires drama/trauma before a change of consciousness can occur, an insight William James (1985/1902: 388) arrived at in his psychological study of religious conversion some hundred years ago. "Normal waking consciousness," as he called it, was but one special type of consciousness, "parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different." Dewey's (1932) latter writings on aesthetics came to a similar conclusion when he argued that education should be *an* experience. By this he meant that no transference of knowledge was possible unless an affective dimension of the self took hold.

Such arguments as these appear to be the antithesis of a positivistic approach to education, if the word "education" can still be applied to such approaches. As the introductory quote from Kierkegaard suggests, if creativity and change are to occur, a much different sense of the curriculum is required, one which doesn't religiously follow the chapters of a book to its very end as if knowledge was so easily consumable and digestible. The serendipitous nature of the play of forces between chaos and order, between theory and practice, between all forms of dualisms, is where the struggle for the meaning of "life" as led happens. The need to confront and live with uncertainty, to "hear" what is not spoken (silence), and to play with unanswerable rhetorical questions is where imagination flourishes. This is especially true with the writings in the history of science by Feyerabend (1970) and Kuhn (1970), as well as in the history of poetry (Bloom, 1973) and literature (Derrida, 1978a). The element of surprise and play seems endless when we are in tune with it. Often, to hear a new pitch requires moments of intensification and compression, long sleepless nights, and existential angst. History is littered with instances of such "madness." A great deal of confusion and questioning must take place within the self before an existential crisis takes place and a new equilibrium reached. Mistakes, misinterpretations, and ignorance about ourselves are as much a part of our understanding as that which we believe to be precise and clear (Felman, 1987).

Even such a conservative plea for creativity as the one above, which makes no references to a political education and activism for exercising students' democratic rights, begins to sound "radical" within today's climate of classroom intensification, accountability, and pragmatism. In the past, art education has often seized this territory of "creativity" as a way to differentiate and define itself from other subject disciplines. "Creativity" in the '50s and early '60s was claimed to be its exclusive feature. Creativity meant originality, developing the uniqueness of the child, and freedom. What happened in the art classroom was "different" from other classrooms. Here the students could "truly" explore themselves. By the early '70s, with the radicalization of the universities and the popularity of Abstract Art, the discourse of artistic creativity was firmly entrenched. Unfortunately, as Laura Chapman's book *Instant Art, Instant Culture* (1982) made abundantly clear, art in our schools was never so "free" as art teachers thought. It was caught by a hidden curriculum of positivism which often renders this lofty ideal of creative diversity to standardized mediocrity. Due to time and budget constraints; the choice of materials which could be used safely and quickly; the time of day when art was taught (in elementary schools this usually meant toward the day's end, or only on Fridays); the sheer numbers of students in the "art studio" classroom, as well as the size of the facilities; together with the low status art has in provincial and state curriculums, all led to what has been called institutionalized "school art." The art produced in grade schools all appeared to "look" the same. The artwork of a fifth-grade class on the West Coast was often indistinguishable from artwork produced by a fifth-grade class on the East Coast. The questions of uniformity and levels of accomplishment remain with art teachers today.

Such artistic uniformity, rather than being attributable to the institution of schooling as a discursive formation, is claimed to be a question of *genetic epistemology* (cf. Jean Piaget, Victor Lowenfeld, Howard Gardner). Children's artistic development appears uniform because of some inherent "deep structure" of their brains. Such a structuralist explanation, which rehearses Chomsky's argumentation regarding an inherent "generative grammar," overlooks the historical conditioning that may have shaped the deep structure in the first place. Why children's artistic development appears so uniform may well be a historical condition—a generalizable pattern made possible through the ceaseless expansion of rationalist thought since the Renaissance. Since the middle of the 19th century, the school curriculum has been structured linearly, graded according to chronological age. Rarely do we have art classes where children of various ages learn from one another. The structure of artistic knowledge is presented sequentially and in increments, on the grounds that a fifth-grade student is not capable of the skill nor the imagination of a seventh-grade student. But such a view of artistic knowledge produces a great deal of overlap as children repeat the same formal concepts year after year in color theory, design elements, sculpture, and so on. Art teachers quickly realize that there are tremendous fluctuations in both skill and imagination in any one class. Perspectival art often appears in the early elementary grades, seemingly incongruous to the artistic developmental sequence art teachers have been taught (cf. Victor Lowenfeld). Then there are always "artistic savants" like Nadjia (Selfe, 1977) and Steven Wiltshire (Sacks, 1995) who prove to be the exceptions to the rule. At the age of 3 she was capable of drawing "naturalistically," complete with a sensitivity to line weight, as was Stephen. Also, aboriginal children, who come from a rich oral culture, seem to have advanced drawing skills and a mythic imagination; while Asian children, whose calligraphic influence stems from their ideographic language, have an edge when it comes to line sensitivity. Heterogeneity of abilities is the rule rather than the exception.

Art teachers struggle valiantly to keep their classes in balance, doing art projects where all students are involved at the level of their abilities because there is so much overlap. But the "normal categories" for artistic expression have been defined according to key stages in perceived emotional, social, and mental growth as related to chronological age of a particular class and nation. The school's institutionalized structure is based on this. Consequently, when it begins to decenter, with the variety of pluri-cultures that have to be accommodated today, the standardized art curriculum appears useless, especially when the gaps of difference begin to show themselves in the upper classrooms. The hidden school curriculum often presents too many constraints to permit these wide differences to be taken seriously. Unless there is an extraordinary teacher with extraordinary energy who is able to go out of the way to change the structures that pressure "instant art" mentality, "school art" continues to be reproduced.

Art education remains caught by a modernist understanding of art history, art criticism, and studio art wedded to a psychology of normalizing theories of child development. In a climate of renewed neo-conservatism these foundations are less likely to change but become rewritten and recodified to prop up a falling structure as the call for tightened standards, maintaining excellence, and accountability indicates. Psychology, especially as developed by Rudolf Arnheim and Ernst Gombrich's work in the cognitive and Gestalt psychology of art, has provided the basis of how a "normal" child sees and understands. Unless this base is deconstructed, the "hidden curriculum" will continue to reproduce itself, and art teachers will continue to struggle in an institution which already prescribes what the object of art should be.[3]

Perhaps it is not necessary to recapitulate the critique of schooling which has elevated mind (cognition domain) at the expense of body (affective and psychomotor domains)? A meritocratic system continually updates its scientism to the state of the *art* possibilities. Examinations by Katz (1968), Spring (1972), Bowles and Gintis (1976), Apple (1979), Giroux (1981, 1992a,b), and of course

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[3]See essay 3, "From the Palette to the Palate," in this volume.

many, many ethnographic studies of classroom life have brought a sobering mood to the educational community, so much so that once the critique is taken to heart it becomes difficult to overcome the overwhelming despair and pessimism which accompanies this change of perception. The speed of decision making that must take place within the classroom cannot help but position the teacher into reducing knowledge to an either/or logic. The constructed reality cannot but promote better and better ways to manipulate the student *body*. It should come as no surprise, then, why the computer has become more and more popular as a tool to increase the monitoring potential of students' "progress." In a world governed by speed (cf. Paul Virilio), where the roller-blade is slowly replacing the running shoe, it becomes more and more difficult to track their body as "pesky" kids refuse to stay on the sidewalk, and begin their dangerous competition with the automobile.

It is not easy to come to terms with these changed conditions, nor is it any easier to find solutions to them, nor maintain a critical stance in a time of conservative retrenchment. Besides North America, virtually every European country's educational system finds itself in difficulty. High drop-out rates and the malaise of dissatisfaction experienced by an unemployed youth feed a creeping fascism. This "baby buster" generation has been identified as a "forgotten" generation—a generation "X"—a 13th generation (Williams & Matson, 1993); their life chances for well-paying professional jobs, when compared to the boomer generation, seem remote. Scolded for their consumerist indiscretions and lack of a job ethic by boomers, especially those from the Right who have set themselves up as the new societal moralizers, baby busters perceive a bleak future in these difficult economic times. With companies "down-sizing" (the rhetoric is often that of "right-sizing") part-time jobs become more and more common. The ability to subcontract work is the new reality as companies find new ways to buffer themselves against (in their perception at least) "hard" economic times. The number of senior core employees who still have company benefits continue to decrease.[4]

Unquestionably there are as many possible solutions as there are ideological positions, ranging from ultra Left to ultra Right, to this social and economic instability, now commonly referred to as postmodernity or the postmodern moment; for it is the achievement of the Enlightenment which continues to permeate the modern mind. It continues to shape our curriculum and educational thought like some nebulous transparent cloud which has now become part of our vision; a persistent cataract which has paradoxically become accepted as providing us with a clearer vision. Just how *clear* that vision is has been criticized by critical theorists (Frankfurt School), by feminists of all persuasions, and by high-profile French poststructuralists—Jean Baudrillard, Jean Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida. Overwhelmingly the question of representation brought about by a "linguistic turn" raises questions concerning the artistic canons we teach, the identity politics of the artists we study, and the place of art education in the 21st century given the tremendous changes brought about by electronic technologies.

Public education cannot avoid these debates since its practice has been shaped by the belief in the rational mind. It was through reason, as Hegel argued, that man's teleology could be revealed, the workings of the Absolute Spirit unveiled. When the Prussian State became the apotheosis of that telos, a bourgeois evolutionary progressivism based on technological rationality replaced the spiritualist vision through the new guiding light of pragmatism. Material progress became the new measure. As the ecofeminist critique has shown (Merchant, 1980) Nature became de-spiritualized. By the end of the 19th century a hardened materialism, both in its positivistic and "vulgar" Marxist forms, virtually penetrated all institutions, including education. Not only was there *Proletcult* and socialist Realism, but when America began to modernize, curriculum reform at the turn of the 20th century followed the technological efficiency models of Taylorism, a system of management just as pernicious as any Stalinist revisionism of the communist ideal. Behavioral objectives, intended learning outcomes, input–output models of evaluation, recast today in their updated cybernetic models of curriculum, by and large, still hold the field of educational imagination. Are times changing?

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[4]These trends were noted very early by the Oxford economist David Harvey (1989). James Hunter's (1991) book *Culture Wars* reads this landscape as a battle of values concerning the family, education, the media and the arts, law and politics.

We now live in a period of history where both these "great narratives" of capitalism and communism are dissipating. As Lyotard (1988/1971) has argued: *no more* speculative or rational history after Auschwitz which was both real and irrational; *no more* historical materialism after Prague, which pitted workers against the party; *no more* parliamentary liberalism after Paris 1968, when people rose up against the representative institution; and *no more* economic liberalism after the crises of 1911, 1929, and 1974–9, when the market forces no longer gave rise to the general increase of wealth. The efficiency of the technological imagination as applied to schooling based on the "metanarratives" of scientism is also being questioned, although its stranglehold on education is slowly metamorphosing into a globalism where transnational capitalism no longer sees a national consumerist identity as being particularly useful for profitable gains. In this sense the world we live in is still very "modern." As any number of authors have argued, modernization is that process by which capitalism uproots and makes mobile that which is grounded. It clears away or obliterates that which impedes circulation, and makes exchangeable that which remains singular.[5] In the name of global competition the educational machinery is being re-tooled, or "post-modernized" through Internet links, the hype surrounding the "information highway," and the computerized classroom to meet the demands of this New World Order, a euphemism for the West's economic and geo-strategic interests. The New World Order is supported by Rand Corporation protégés like Francis Fukuyama (1989), who claims that both "history" and "ideology" have now come to an end precisely because the New World Order is founded on principles of liberal democracy, the "universal, homogeneous state," consumerism, and free-market economics. There is no need any longer to struggle for "just causes."

Against such globalizing trends and liberalist rhetoric, we also live in a world where neo-racism, in its postmodern guises, identifies the "immigrant" as the new alien Other (Balibar, 1991); where fascism continues to raise its ugly head in Bosnia-Herzegovina; where the decentralization of the Soviet Republic has brought about renewed nationalism and barbarism; where diasporic identities struggle for recognition (Barber, 1992); and where AIDS continues its pestilence, a sure sign by religious fundamentalists that the Apocalypse is near at hand.

Derrida's (1992) articulation of such an apocalyptic mood concerning postmodernism seems pertinent here. He points out that the West has always been dominated by a discourse of ends, final revelations, and even the end of ends. Through a seemingly innocuous example written by Nietzsche in the margins of his notebook, "I have forgotten my umbrella," Derrida is able to show parallel implications of what is at stake in the apocalyptic question. First, the sentence can be interpreted superficially. It has one meaning, and one meaning only, and therefore there is no more possibility about writing about it. Or, the interpretative possibilities of the sentence are endless. The two possibilities answer the question posed by the sublimity of apocalyptic thought: Either there is one meaning—an end, or final word, to the revelation of truth—or there is no limit to what can be said—infinite possibilities are available. In either case, a silence imposes itself. In the first case, this silence arises by the impossibility of saying anything more to what can be said. In the second case, silence arises by the impossibility of ever saying enough! Somewhere near these limits, Derrida's deconstruction plays with meaning, and ideologues search for solutions. In *Postmodern Apocalypse: Theory and Cultural Practice at the End* (1995) the editor, Richard Dellamora, takes note that many of the authors take up Jacques Derrida's call "for the other tone, or the tone of another, to come at no matter what moment to interrupt a familiar music" (in Dellamora, 1995: 2). One author in particular, Darren Wershler-Henry (1995), plays off Derrida and Ice-T, taking us back to our own irreverent beginning where Ice-T's Gangsta Rap meets Mr. Holland's Opus, where the violence of rap's noise—its speed and complexity of rapid-fire vocal delivery—meets the soothing sounds of operatic complacency.

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[5]This argument is presented by Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (1982); Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari develop this further as a process of "deterritorialization" and "re-territorialization" in their *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1977), pp. 200–261; based on the economic theories of Ernst Mandel, Fredric Jameson (1984) reads postmodernity as yet another bid of late capitalism to restructure itself.

Jacques Attali (1985), Charles de Gaulle's former culture minister, claims that *noise* heralds the political organization of the era which is to follow from its disruptive interventions. He deconstructs the music–noise binary by arguing that music is a coded noise that a listener learns. Noise, therefore, disrupts and displaces the given musical code which, in turn, becomes music. Wershler-Henry raises the question of whether the contemporary prophets of rage, of hard-core gangsta rap rhyming in apocalyptic G-styles (*Public Enemy, On Apocalypse 91, The Enemy Strikes Back*), represent the future.

Where there is noise there is, as John Gage has it, silence. Silence indicates a fundamental impossibility of knowing any answers, only attempts—the challenge to think of the future as an "*infinity of heterogeneous finalities*" as Lyotard (1987: 179, original emphasis) put it. Given the challenge of silence, are we now to abandon the modernist dream of progress and critique, wholesale? Perhaps follow Richard Rorty's (1991) "postmodern bourgeois-liberal neo-pragmatism" where, shorn of all foundationalism, all we are left with is "language games" and cultural "forms of life"; a pluralism where the truth is decided through a "conversation" that fits with what is currently the "good in the way of belief," i.e., consensually warranted belief? Do we now do away with any sense of universal foundations? abandon the critique of public consensus and allow for all kinds of vagaries in the private sphere? maintaining a public/private split as Rorty wants it? Or, perhaps, we must settle for Lyotard's (1988) claim that ultimately our rationalizations are confronted with an incommensurability, a *differend* between two equally valid but opposed arguments? Is there no way, then, of deciding who is "right"? Must we admit that the arguments put forth by neo-Nazi revisionists are equally as valid as those who survived the Holocaust? Or, better still, do we enter the Baudrillian (1983) world of *simulacra* abandoning all sense of rootedness and "ground" on the premise that "ground" here is only a metaphorical illusion, a copy of a copy? With the generation of computer imagery we have entered a world of cyberspace which is radically different from the mimetic capacities of film, photography, and television; the representation of "real optically perceived space" has vanished into an "aesthetics of disappearance" according to Virilio (1991). So where does art education find itself amongst such daunting propositions? We live in a world where our current education seems to be anachronistic to today's realities. How is art education to meet this challenge of postmodernity given the changed realities in technology, in consumerism, in our outlook to youth culture, and in the diasporic identities of post-colonialism that question the very hegemony of some totalized solution?

The following layers, which I call "Signs of the X," attempt to develop some of the background that will enable the reader to recognize within the two volumes where my response to questions such as those raised above came from. The "X" has become a polyvalent "undecidable" sign in postmodernism. It can mean both a "crossing" as well as a "prohibition." It can refer to a "lost" generation or to Malcolm's "X" generation, a signifier for an uncompromising Black activism. It can refer to musical bands like Xtreme or to "Xtreme" sports such as ultra-marathons and Iron Man triathlons. These layers are written with a strong historical frame, with the strategic intent of situating where I find myself in the postmodern debate.[6] For an art educator to undertake a trajectory of change I think it is important to have a grasp of how vision has been historically shaped so that we can better comprehend how it is, once again, undergoing change during this postmodern transition. With this in mind, there are purposeful repetitions and redundancies of thought throughout these layerings; concerns and concepts are repeated and restated in different ways but from different perspectives. Such a historical narrative cannot be related in any chronological or linear way, but I hope the effect of the writing will leave the reader with a number of instances of what kind of "object" postmodern might be, and the place of vision in it. This is a sublime undertaking since comprehending the postmodern is "impossible," we are still too close to it.

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[6]I owe a debt of thanks to my former teacher Harry Garfinkel, who taught me the value of thinking historically. In this regard I would see the necessity of history, despite its current deconstruction, as an important way to position oneself within these debates. It will become clear that I am sympathetic with Jameson and his call for a cultural memory to situate oneself. As Derrida rhetorically asks in *Specters of Marx* (1994), "How can one be late to the end of history? A question for today. . . . It obliges one to wonder if the end of history is but the end of a *certain* concept of history."

Text

> [T]hese implications [the way we learn to apply new relational
> principles to ethical life] . . . articulate fundamental contradictions
> in contemporary life between an unprecedented cultural wealth
> and freedom affording us enhanced access to everything intimate,
> lyrical, and proprial and an unprecedented vulnerability to
> external forces that threaten not only to deny us that intimacy
> but also to translate it into the mechanical, the arbitrary, and the
> simulacral. (Charles Altieri, 1994: 170)

The Signs of the X

I
The Formation of Telematic Consciousness:
Dispelled Memories

Paradoxically, visual art education is embroiled in the *one* sense which has been able to advance the dominance of a technocratic rationality, i.e., *the objectification of sight*, the most distant of all the senses which presents viewers with warrants for truth claims. From a "radical" feminist perspective that maintains an essential difference, this modernist objectification of sight has been decidedly a male preoccupation and dream. What underwrites its trajectory is the desire of domination, universalism, control, and patriarchal domination as it is articulated through capitalist and liberalist forms of socio-economic expansion. The following layer develops the interrelationships between spectatorship, vision, knowledge, self, and technology, which lead up to the telematic consciousness of postmodernity. The separation of the act of seeing from the body proper is perhaps the single most important development in its formation.

Perhaps one of the most significant theses written to date about the development of such an abstraction of vision is Jonathan Cary's *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (1990). Many historical accounts posit the origins of modernist visual art and culture in the 1870s and 1880s with Manet, impressionism, and/or postimpressionism as a new model of visual representation and perception constituting a radical break with the paradigm of Renaissance perspective. Photography (ca. 1839) and cinema (ca. 1878 with Muybridge's "The Horse in Motion"), on the other hand, are simply understood as the continuance of *classical* perspectival space and perception. In contrast, Cary argues that the events of the 1820s and 1830s produced a new kind of observer. These decades set the preconditions for the ongoing abstraction of vision that underwrote both of these later developments.

Prior to the early 19th century, from the late 1500s to the end of the 1700s, the structural optical principles of the Cartesian camera obscura[7] were the dominant paradigm which demarcated the possibilities of observation. As an optical device the camera obscura made a strict separation between inside and outside possible. The position of an interiorized observer to an exterior world was achieved by isolating and enclosing an observer *within* the apparatus itself, performing an operation of individuation whereby the observer withdrew from the world in order to examine the projection of Nature (the "outside") as it appeared on the wall inside the camera (darkened room). This projection

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[7]Cary treats the camera obscura not simply as a technical device, nor as a discursive object, but "a complex social amalgam in which its existence as a textual figure was never separable from its machinic uses" (p. 31).

was made possible by light entering through a pinhole cut in the opposite wall. A concave speculum inserted at the site of the pinhole ensured that the projected image was not inverted. Such an optical regime separated a priori the image from its object, marking a paradigm shift from the perspectival regime where an exterior observer translated an exterior world through a two-dimensional representation. Although Cary does not develop the visual shifts prior to the camera obscura, it should be noted that the camera obscura's development presents the "paradigmatic" end point of a much longer development. Put in Marx's terms—when the historical conditions make it possible for an abstract category to be actualized, to move from a being *in-itself* to a being *for-itself.* It becomes what it always/already was. During the Gothic no meta-sign (a sign about signs) existed. Its signifying system was iconic, i.e., a sign for sign. There was no referentiality, and no anteriority of the self existed. Medieval image makers did not categorize their efforts in terms of referentiality. They neither claimed nor denied a posterior relation to some real, waiting-to-be-depicted world. It was only during the late Gothic that the vanishing point as a meta-sign was introduced. The "perspectival subject" was born coded by a vanishing point located *outside* the frame in relation to the imagined identification with the artist's viewpoint. The Gothic subject was transformed into an objectified mirror-like visual pronoun. *Subjective anteriority was now present.* The self became a demonstrable pronoun but self-portraiture paradigmatically exemplified by Rembrandt was the next stage of this development. Cary picks up the story with the internalization of the vanishing point in Northern Holland through the invention of two-point perspective which now included the existence of a viewer *inside* the picture frame as well. In this sense the camera obscura marked the closure of the vanishing point. The vanishing point as a meta-sign has become "ordinary" and natural, just another sign. The artist's transcendental vision discards the body and exists only as a disembodied *punctum*; the *punctum* being the second vanishing point in the picture. The internal vision of the subject is split in two: the subject of looking and the looked-on subject. Vermeer can now paint himself painting (e.g., *Di Schilderkonst,* which translates as *The Art of Painting,* now renamed as *The Artist in His Studio*). *Self-anteriority is now placed in abeyance* (cf. Rotman). Contemplation becomes possible as the spectator's fusion with the artist calls for the absence of any exterior point of view. The world does not precede the viewer but begins to exist alongside the viewer, coterminously with the viewing presence. In effect, the spectator sees the artist seeing.

The paintings of Vermeer's interiors demonstrate the paradigm of the Cartesian camera obscura where a strict separation was maintained between primary (*res cognitas*) and secondary (*res extensa*) qualities, i.e., between the observer and the world. Vermeer paints himself in the act of painting, or he paints paradigmatic figures like geographers or astronomers displaying an inward contemplation; their thought captured in rapt stillness within a room which is an orderly projection of the fruits of their intellectual mastery, e.g., maps, globes, charts. For the very first time the correspondence of a sign to the "thing" signified was no longer possible. "Things" and the metaphorical signs for representing them became fictitious. It was up to Vermeer's "imagination" as to what he painted. There was no externally situated perspectival seeing. Vermeer rendered impossible the picture of a prior world. The object that was observed and the act of observation could not be separated. *Anteriority had been deconstructed.* The artist could never represent the act of representing itself; the presence of the artist to consciousness as the condition of possibility of meaning is negated, i.e., the self-presence of the artist is *absent* from painting. Whereas Vermeer and Velásquez painted complicated images of themselves painting, Rembrandt explored the interiority of the artist through self-portraiture, while Montaigne wrote himself writing, inscribing an image of himself within the "essay" form—an image he formed busily writing ("scribbling" he called it) about the imaginary scenes Montaigne chose to lay before himself. That self could not be separated form the processes of depiction itself. The illusion of interiority, the fantasy world of the "thing," was impossible to depict.

Hence, from such an optical regime emerged a metaphysics of *interiority* brought on by the deconstruction of prior self-anteriority (the correspondence theory of one-point perspective). The observer was nominally a free sovereign individual as well as a privatized subject who was cut off