



Jose Manuel Ballester, *Place for a Birth*, 2012. Digital printing on fabric, 172.5 x 278 cm. Bit.ly/BallesterArt.

Why We Need the Arts More Than Ever

Eric Gibbons

If you've been online at all recently, you may have noticed how important the arts have become during this pandemic. People are turning to the visual arts, dance, theater, music, books, and movies for comfort and joy. Following, you'll find some misconceptions about the arts and facts that support their value.

Misconception: Students will not have access to art supplies.

Fact: Art is more than paint and canvas. Artists create with what they have around them—sticks, leaves, coffee-based paint, and more. The lowest-income countries create awesome art with very little. We recycle and repurpose in art, strengthening ideas about ecology and biology. Two plus two in math is always four, but in art, one

problem can have many solutions using more than one material.

Misconception: Art is enrichment and we need to focus on academics.

Fact: Art incorporates academics more than any other subject. When we grid, measure, and draw, we use geometry. When we make sculptures,

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we use engineering. When we mix colors, we reveal information about physics. When we create illustrations for stories, we learn about literature. When we review the styles of art from da Vinci to Banksy, we teach history. When we teach ceramics,

we teach chemistry. When we write about art, we strengthen our writing skills. When we create works of art, we solve complex visual problems in creative ways.

Misconception: We need to focus on Core Content.

Fact: Core Content is strengthened by art education. Students who take art outscore their non-art peers significantly on standardized tests. On average, art students score 100 points higher on their SAT exams.

Misconception: We can't get back to arts education after the pandemic.

Fact: Now more than ever, art education is necessary *because* of the pandemic. NCBI (National Center for Biotechnology Information) has definitive studies that show art:

- fills occupational voids and distracts from thoughts of illness; improves flow and spontaneity, expression of grief, positive identity, and social networks.
- improves well-being by decreasing negative emotions and increasing positive ones.
- improves medical outcomes.
- reduces stress, distress, anxiety, and negative emotions.
- reduces symptoms of compassion fatigue; increases healing, well-being, and sense of purpose.
- improves focus on positive life experiences, self-worth, and social identity.

Misconception: Families are overwhelmed and adding art is just too much right now.

Fact: Families are asking for non-academic resources for their children, for the therapeutic reasons mentioned above and for beneficial, on-task activities. 

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