

Art Education in Practice Series

Marilyn G. Stewart

Editor

Artmaking, Play, and Meaning Making

Assessment in Art Education

Community Art in Action

Differentiated Instruction in Art

Engaging Visual Culture

Gender Matters in Art Education

Rethinking Curriculum in Art

Roots of Art Education Practice

Talking about Student Art

Teaching Meaning in Art Making

Therapeutic Approaches in Art Education

Thinking through Aesthetics

Using the Art Museum

Amelia M. Kraehe

Joni B. Acuff

Race and Art Education



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Series Preface

Follow an art teacher around for a day—and then stand amazed. At any given moment, the art teacher has a ready knowledge of materials available for making and responding to art; lesson plans with objectives for student learning; resources for extending art learning to other subjects; and the capabilities, interests, and needs of the students in the artroom. Often shifting several times a day from working with preschoolers to those in elementary, middle, and high school, the art teacher decides what to teach, how to teach it, whether students have learned it, and what to do next. The need for rapid decision making in the artroom is relentless.

The art teacher's day continues after school with student learning assessments, curriculum planning, organization of materials, and activities within the school community. Although most teachers want to stay current with new findings and developments in their field, finding time regularly to keep up with the literature is a challenge. *Art Education in Practice* provides the art teacher, museum educator, student, scholar, and layperson with an overview of significant topics in art education theory and practice. The series is designed to meet the needs of art educators who want to think critically about the issues, rationales,

and practical implications of accepting curricular proposals, with input from a variety of scholarly and political perspectives.

The series emphasizes informed practice. Each book focuses on a timely, relevant topic from art education literature and advocacy statements, and connects the ideas to the classroom. The goal of the series is to complement the professional libraries of practitioners in the field of art education and, in turn, enhance the art-related lives of their students.

Editor's Introduction

Settling down to write this introduction, I did what I do every day as I ease into work—I perused the morning paper, checked emails, and did a quick scan of Facebook.

The paper reported a horrific “Zoom-bombing” that took place during a state university's student Black Caucus meeting. According to the story, several individuals interrupted the meeting, exposed themselves to the student group, and screamed racial and homophobic slurs, using white supremacist and anti-Semitic language and symbols.

While disgusting and unsettling, the news of this Zoom attack is consistent with the kinds of stories steadily coming into our lives, reminding us of the recently emboldened hatred that has been festering beneath the surface of our so-called civil society.

I moved on to Facebook where I was struck by a post in an art teacher group:

I am teaching about the Harlem Renaissance. I want to be accurate and teach my students about anti-racism. I admit that I am from a small town...and I am naive about the issues facing my fellow Americans and I want to be part of the

solution and not the problem. Any advice on how to teach my students? I am most likely missing a lot of information, but I would like to start somewhere.

How can I teach my students about anti-racism through art?

Yes, this is our world these days. All around us we see despicable evidence of people stuck in centuries'-old assumptions fueled by fear. Yet we also encounter signs of new understandings, of people awakening to issues of racial and social justice, seeking ways to be, as this teacher put it, “part of the solution.” Much of the new awareness is tied to language, as parts of the populace grasp meanings of terms heard but not really understood until recently. Expressions such as white privilege, systemic racism, and racial bias have moved from the periphery into mainstream discourse.

I am genuinely moved but not at all surprised by an art teacher's request for help in teaching anti-racism. Art educators recognize art's enormous potential to raise awareness of important human issues. They are also keenly aware that the art room is a space where difficult conversations can happen and minds can be opened. She says that she is “missing a

lot of information.” I believe she speaks for all of us. We’ve felt new pain, we’ve learned new language, we’ve doubled our commitment, and yet we fear getting it wrong.

Amy Kraehe and Joni Acuff recognize that their readers come to this book with varying degrees of understanding. The authors offer a gentle yet firm hand as they present the history of racial inequality and the complexities of race in our culture. They provide a close look at how visual representations in art and popular culture impact beliefs, values, and behaviors. Readers will become facile with essential vocabulary as they try it on and see its relevance in their lives and the lives of their students. Kraehe and Acuff make it clear that we all start on this path toward anti-racist pedagogy from different points. In the process of taking their readers through the compelling content and reflections, they insist that once on the path, there’s no getting it “wrong.” The whole book is about becoming—trying and retrying. I have a vision of how it will look in the hands of the highly competent art teachers who seek it out, return to it often, and mark it up with comments in the margins and sticky notes on its pages. The authors encourage its use in this way. What becomes increasingly clear as one moves through its pages

is that the work we do here is of the greatest consequence. I sincerely believe our very humanity rests in the balance.

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