

Student Panel Transcription

...lecture to Dr. Arthur Efland, a faculty member of Ohio State University, has always had an interest in the history of art education. I have also been very fortunate to be able to use not only his book on the history of art education, but also a wonderful book on post-fathered art education purchased curriculum, which he has always also been interested in, developing several state guides in Ohio. His current interest is in cognition and art education.

This was written in a book recently. I have a lecture week going on order. We are very pleased to have him here this morning for a graduate student session, question and answer session.

His presentation last night was wonderful. It was a very enlightening experience for me, seeing his perceptions of art education firsthand, things that I hadn't read about, but that he experienced. It's really a pleasure to have him here.

I've been wanting to get him here for several years, and he's been very busy writing, and it's really quite an honor to have him here. One of the things I would like to do, maybe, go around and introduce each other as graduate students here, a little bit about yourself, and then we'll go to some questions. My name is Sarah Brashears, and I will be graduating with an M.A. in August, and that's it.

I'm excited to be here. My name is Stephen Smith, and I'll also be graduating with a M.A. in August. I graduated with my master's with a B.S. in art education, and also a B.F.A. My name is Jen Higgins, and I'll be getting an M.A. in art education, and I'll be graduating in June.

I'm Jeff Harrell, and I will be graduating next spring with an M.A. in art education, and I graduated with a B.F.A. That's about my name, just by the way of the questions. I was interested in talking about visual culture, and how you had found a split between the masterpiece, teaching masterpiece artwork, as opposed to everyday visual culture. I thought maybe you could explain how that was interesting.

Yeah, I should have brought the paper that I wrote on, because what I talked about last time was a summary of it. But when I... Let me back up by saying that one of the co-authors of the post-modern world was Gary Friedman, and she and Pat Stern, they went to school together. They were both graduates of the University of Wisconsin.

But Gary, in particular, has been one of the leading advocates of the visual culture, and the proponent of it. Pat is also to a somewhat lesser extent. Pat's interests are more involved, in what I guess you might call the anthropology of art education.

And her own work has focused a very heavily on Native American behavior, and the problems of teaching to Native American students. But Gary has worked on a book on visual culture, which our Teachers College Press, I think, is coming out. And I was asked to read you the manuscript.

I told them they should publish it. And so, one of the things I noticed about Gary's writing, is that when Gary deals with the topic of visual culture, almost invariably shows us references to what I would call canonical works, or at least works of major painters, major personalities

in the world. And then use that as a way of approaching other themes that might be reflective of the topic of culture.

And that's particularly an orientation that I support very strongly. But a lot of people in that book about visual culture, will argue that, well, the art of the professional fine arts community, is very elitist, it's very difficult to understand. Most of the kids in the school don't know what all the fuss is about.

They can't make heads or tails out of it. It doesn't speak to them. And that may be what we should do as well, in images that are more meaningful to them.

Images of the culture. And so that they would sort of misuse the masterpiece in favor of it, because of its elitist bias. And I can understand the desire to want to communicate with the students more directly, and to address the issues that are of concern to them.

But at the same time, it seems to me that we have a... You know, every field has its high moments of achievement. If you're a biology major, you know about Watson and Crick and the DNA molecule theory. And it's one of the great achievements in biological science.

Or the theory of relativity, by Einstein, is another one of those high moments of human achievement. So nobody ever raises the charge of elitism when referring to those things. I think this is just common knowledge that we teach kids about.

So it occurred to me, why are we so unwilling or reluctant to look at those things that have been important achievements? Why are we so willing and ready to dismiss them? So that's been my worry and concern. So I've been trying to answer the question, well, what do they really teach us? Why do we need a leader? And part of it is, one of the answers I came up to is, that they do embody a certain kind of culture. They speak of things that have happened.

Another part of it is that they... Another reason, I had three reasons. I don't know if I can remember them all. But that was the first one.

The idea of culture. The second one was the complexity issue. What I would call the cognitive one.

The key words of art tend to be more complex. They tend to have more cultural references. They need to be prepared to see them.

And it seems to me that that's one of the purposes of our field. To provide some of that information. So that was the second one.

What was the third one? I can't remember the third one. Sorry. I'll probably come back to it.

But anyway, that was the... What I did in the paper was I got into some issues in aesthetics. Where I argued that the modernist argument of what it is was a kind of a mistaken argument. This is not to say that works of art haven't been used by elites to advance their own social standing and things like that.

And that certainly has been true, perhaps. But that the work of art isn't in and of itself but rather that it's been used for these purposes. And that we should notice that.

And that the final argument is what I would call an argument based on what I would call the freedom of cultural life. It's a freedom that I feel reflects the vision of culture in general. But I would say that rather than abandon the works of art simply because they are elites, maybe what we should do is enable people to look at them and make that choice for themselves.

If they don't, you know... Somebody who saw my son last night at the talk and I remember there was in Columbus one year when he was in the 8th grade there was a show called The Reclining Creek, and we were sculpturing. And my wife and I argued with him about why Henry Moore was really good stuff that we should look at. And he says, well I think those holes in the wall are right.

And he still feels this way. But in more recent years he said, well yeah, but I can appreciate the craftsmanship. But I think that's all we can do as teachers.

We can kind of point out what we see as having value. But as you can see we ultimately have the power to judge the work of the militarists. And they may not necessarily do this.

But that is a kind of what I would call a freedom of culture. In order for them to have access to that freedom they need to have some kind of ownership. And then after that preparation they can make that choice for themselves.

I don't know if that summarizes all the paper. I touched on a big number of things last night. And I was kind of curious, especially as a layman, as to what points of this you thought were strong versus what were weak.

As far as this goes. Well, Lohenfeld is really one of the complex figures in our history. He's complex because he comes from a different culture.

He comes from a Viennese culture. And he had a particular history which we were able to see. I never met him.

My mother-in-law was a classmate of his. And they were both students of Franz Czesiak. And Lohenfeld was taught by Czesiak.

And they liked him. He was an amateur, but not really. But without the psychological ground that Lohenfeld went to to get an education.

So Lohenfeld created the research commission. Almost at the end of it, he created the research commission. And he was a rigorous empiricist.

But somehow the photo of Lohenfeld is that he was one of the people who had a strong advocacy and creative expression. And that we shouldn't impose our adult ideas on the child. But what people forget about Lohenfeld is that he was a very strong leader.

The role of the teacher has motivated him to some degree. He didn't just wait around for things to happen. The laissez-faire and self-expression and philosophy and education.

He tried to make things happen by certain kinds of experiences. Usually the experiences involved the senses. One of the famous ones was the cancer.

He would have the children draw a self-portrait first. They would draw pictures of themselves. And then he would pass them caramel candies.

And then they would chew the candy. And while they were chewing the candy, he would point out how hard, how it's really hard to work and chew the candy and chew the teeth. And then he said, now I'd like you to draw another self-portrait.

And at this time, what you saw in the picture was a big emphasis on the smile and the teeth. And you can find that in his text. So Lohenfeld was very... That side of Lohenfeld, I think, is still with us.

He still represents good teaching. We're... As a student of McPhee, June was one of the people who was in her doctoral dissertation doing a study of the literature on why people develop certain dispositions to draw the way they do and not some other way. And Lohenfeld had an explanation that when kids approach adolescents, they either are going to approach art visually through their visual modality or that they're going to do it in a much more involved sense of touch.

And this came out of his work with the blind. Because he saw this with a partially sighted blind. And he came to the conclusion that these dispositions were innate, that people were born with them.

And what June was able to identify in a lot of her work, and the work was... A lot of the work was with Air Force pilots. And why is it that some guys can fly an airplane in a pea soup fog that can't see up or down. They don't know where the ground is, they don't know where the horizon is, but they can really, really fly by the seat of their pants.

And others can't. But was this an innate disposition to do this or was this... Or was this something that you learned? It turns out that it's something you can learn. And that at a certain kind of training you can be able to sort out a tactile or a plot point with what the researchers call postural cues.

In a sense, the direction of the pull of gravity. And men have it to a greater degree than women and men. And this comes to the fact that very often in childhood boys or little boys would be encouraged to explore their environment, to touch things.

And girls would be told not to get dirty and not to take risks. So these dispositions are sort of not in the work, but acquired culturally or by the museum. And so Jim was able to piece together a lot of evidence that challenged the visual path of dichotomy.

Now what you told me was that she presented her dissertation to Lowenfeld the year before Lowenfeld died and it was very interesting what she was writing about. And it was, I think it was, they talked about getting together later and pursuing their talk about the differences in their theoretical views, which never came to pass. Because Lowenfeld died in 1960.

But that was, but Lowenfeld also came along before what I would call the cognitive revolution. I think if he had lived another ten years, if he died at age 57, until say 67, I think he would probably have taken a position a little more close to the kind of position that Lowenfeld did. But it was interesting, Lowenfeld wrote a nasty letter to Martin.

Martin came out with this book, *A Foundation for the Art of Education*. And they listed four or five places where Lowenfeld marked them as wrong, misread, as Lowenfeld's work. And then at the end of the letters, Lowenfeld writes, By the way, I'm going to be in Cleveland next week at the Ohio Art Ex.

I don't know why they didn't get together for lunch to talk about it. So they were really very good friends. And Toby and Annie would go over to State College, Pennsylvania to visit Lowenfeld.

And that became a kind of tradition. And in those days, if you were striving to State College, Pennsylvania, that was how you got a job. The interstate aid wasn't built yet.

So you had to go in a kind of backward way. But that was something they did. So I don't know.

And is this the question? Yes. The question is, I've read a few articles in the papers. The first one is, quote, It's meant to be so unique to see why the curriculum in Pennsylvania has failed.

Why did I advance the institution from that point to this point? I was curious. It was a fascinating article. Oh, yeah.

At that time, I might remember that chart where I showed before different aesthetic orientations. I think I'm still... I'm still... That was kind of a current notion. I think it was written... That particular paper was kind of an article for the *Interact* issue, which I was the guest writer to.

The other journal was published at Ohio State, *Theory and Practice*, and my son's music teacher who later was a teacher starting on the plan. And he was a TA, and he worked for the editor of the journal. He said, well, you want to do something for that journal, so I wrote a little proposal.

And then I consulted with some people about the other areas in which we should participate. And that's how that paper was written. But I think the article, as I remember it, I don't remember it very well, but I think that was my article.

For me, at that time, I was using aesthetics as the unit of culture. That what distinguishes the way we teach art are the different orientations and aesthetics that we take to it. And once you take a particular orientation, then the criteria that we use for judging would change.

So I think the idea of art is imitation. The imitation of nature. You judge the work by how well it imitates the nature of the work.

Not so much whether it has whether you're able to produce a likeness in the work you're doing. But if your work was more expressive of imitation, the criteria would shift. Ideas or feelings that you would get from talking about the work.

And if you ended up being a formalist or an object of this, you would be very interested in the structure of the work. So from the standpoint of... Thank you for being with us for the last day. I appreciate it.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

So I think I was kind of, that was kind of in the back of my mind, I'm not sure. There was a lot of stuff, I was reading a lot of stuff about, about the teaching and how assessment is done. And I was, at the time, a little bit upset with approaches to accountability that relied too much on factual knowledge.

And it was if everything, so many of the accountabilities, particularly in standardized testing, there are right answers to every question. And I was looking for a kind of accountability that would recognize that there may be criteria that don't necessarily, that might, that there may not be a right interpretation. So I think I don't know if those ideas, those are the sort of ideas that you've been playing with more recently.

I'm more, the way, I might have said that I didn't, but the way I would sort of look at it now is, I'm much more interested in the role of the imaginative, how we produce meaning through the arrangement of shapes. And a lot of the work in imagination is coming out of, it's not coming out of the visuals, it's coming out of fields like linguistics. And particularly the study of metaphor, so that we might have a number of expressions, verbal expressions, but the same underlying metaphor might be what connects them.

So one of the examples I use in my book about cognition, I don't know if I can actually use it, but yeah. That a lot of our ideas about the world are worked up with our physical experience of balance, and balance comes into the visualizer. But when we first learn to walk, we acquire the ability to maintain our balance.

Walking is a kind of falling where you keep stopping yourself, taking a step, and you have to maintain a sense of equilibrium. And you don't learn that by learning rules, you simply learn it by doing it. It's a kind of bodily experience that you develop, usually by the time you're one years old, before you have language.

But then, once that experience is in you, as part of your body experience, then it's possible to extend the concept of balance to cover other areas of opportunity. So we might talk about John as a balanced personality. We're sort of reading, taking knowledge of balance, and talking about it, and connecting it with this metaphoric speaking to describe somebody's personality.

If I balance personality, we create a meaning that isn't the physical experience of balancing, but it's a way of talking about a person's character, a person's personality. Or we might use the concept of balance in mathematics, like the balance of an equation. Or we might talk about the balance of justice.

So here, it's something that we're learning physically, in our voluntary mindset. Suddenly, we're able to deal with it in an abstract way. We're able to deal with the abstract conception of the balance of justice.

We even have the Statue of Mary in front of the courthouses, where the goddess of justice is holding the scales of justice and balance. Our souls are being waged by the balance of justice. So being able to go from a very physical experience to a very abstract experience is something that linguists have been very interested in tracing through language.

We have all these linguistic terms for ways of using balance, but the metaphor of balance is underlies them all. It's sort of there as a kind of conceptual metaphor that applies to a variety of experiences. Now, somebody might argue, well, that's all very fine for the literary, but what does that have to do with the visual metaphors? So one of the examples I use is the Man Ray.

This is actually Noel Carroll's example. He raised the issue of visual metaphors, and he uses the Man Ray's photograph book. It's called *The Violin of a Man*, which is the back of a female nude with the fret board of a violin put on the back.

He explains why this is a visual metaphor. What is a violin? A violin is an instrument, something you play with. But when you apply that metaphor to a woman, what is it saying about a woman? A woman is an instrument you play with.

There's a kind of a sexual innuendo, and particularly since a woman is wearing a turban, it was sort of as a reference to the 19th century Harold paintings that were very popular in France at that time. So we have a lot of scenes. So Man Ray, by very true means, is able to raise issues by visual means without having to say anything.

But it opens us up to a variety of different meanings. I should say that Chuck Dorn wrote a book called *Mind in America*, with the image of Man Ray on the cover of his book. If he didn't have it on the cover of his book, I would have chosen a different book.

But I have a copy of the book. Ralph Smith, when he saw it, wrote a review of the book. When he wrote to me, I was like, by the way, cognition is not yellow.

Because they printed the book with yellow colors. You have spoken quite a bit about your son yesterday and today, which I think is lovely because separating your personal life from your professional life isn't always something that comes down. So when your son was going to school and a child is uneducated and inexperienced, that influenced where you were going with your own studies, mainly his teachers or what he experienced as a child doing his own homework and what you encouraged him to do.

Yeah, that makes sense. Well, David went to two private schools. One of them was kind of an ultra-progressive school.

He went into the left when he left kindergarten. He actually had some ability to be a bystander. He may have forgotten me now.

So we certainly have to change to another school. The emphasis was very academic. David was not a particularly enthusiastic art maker.

He liked to tell you, write like something. But it wasn't until he got into fifth grade that he had an art teacher. So he went to school and he had some ability to teach himself at school from a well-educated school.

And Nancy had the usual way of saying art education activities. But one of the things that she had also was she was able to get Wellington to install and build a darkroom. And David loved the darkroom.

He took a lot of photographs and did a lot of black-and-white processing. And he became very good at building these little teams. He was very adept at it.

And I think it's kind of helped him in his city planning. But I can't say that anything that happened in school was something that led me to change what I would write about. Jenny and I were friends with Nancy.

And we were generally very supportive of her efforts. We haven't gotten to this point yet. My question I think is as we study here in school, we're all wondering how much of what we learn, historical information and the different philosophies we're going to see once we get out there and become a teacher.

And if we can apply those things in the everyday school system. I guess that's my reason to see if you were saying that with me also. Well, what's the answer? You're going to find that the first couple of years of teaching in public schools, a lot of the stuff you're taught, you're just not going to be able to use.

In the first place, the school is about something other than the teaching department. It's got a full agenda. And it's not always easy for students to have a lot of time to do this.

And so a lot of times you're going to find yourself feeling very frustrated that you're not going to be able to do the things that you wanted to do. So some of the stuff that I think you're taught in your theory classes is stuff that you might be able to use to argue with non-believers that what you're teaching has standing. And every once in a while you're going to find that you make a little headway.

Sometimes you have to take back a step. I'll give you an example. The first year I taught at Millbrae, California.

I was in Millbrae on the San Francisco Peninsula. It was about 14 miles south of San Francisco. And the neighboring communities like Burlingame and San Mateo had our teachers in hand.

So they thought they were perfect. Some of the principals thought they were perfect. They didn't really need one.

They had teachers, classic teachers who were doing the job. And by and large they were doing the job. So for me it was kind of important to kind of show that there could be more to be done.

And one of the ways I did it was the same year that they created the Art Teaching Institution, they created a program for the gifted and talented. And so what I did as the art teacher is I organized an exhibit and made material on the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Because these kids in the gifted and talented class were not very creative.

I mean you fed them information and it sort of went into a black hole. But they didn't really give anything back. It's sort of like they had an orphan.

They didn't converge to take it home to the museum. They were all primed. But to get them to look at a building, or to look at something like a drawing of Frank Lloyd Wright and see what it was that he was about as an architect, that was something that nobody had thought of as appropriate content.

I got the idea from people like Judith who had a project on creativity. And one of the ideas was that if you want kids to understand creativity, they should study the lives of creative people. And they should maybe meet people who are highly creative.

They may be an architect, a cab driver, or whatever. But that experience would provide them a certain amount of experience. So I had a couple of issues of the museum called House View.

And there were two large supplemental issues on White's Hill. I took a lot of pictures out of the museum. And that was kind of a way to make a connection to something that was in the academic program.

And before that, one of the ways that we did it was always to do a big mural for the socials in the Westwood. But I wanted something that was adaptable. And Wright had just died.

I think he was 60 or something. He just died a few years ago. He was still in the Soap Academy.

I was interested in the personal level. Looking back, when you were a painter, I'm sure you still do. Yeah, I'm still doing it.

Yeah, that's what my wife said. You shouldn't put so much work into this stuff. I was just wondering how your experience as a painter and studying art, your art experience for yourself personally, how did that carry over into your musicals? What kind of education did you get? Well, I never was able to connect my own work.

Except once in a while I did bring my own work into the show. Since I have a teacher, sometimes the kids do what I do for myself. And I found that by having my own work, for one thing, it sort of validated me.

I kind of felt that I had a life as an art painter. And it was... I have to tell you, first of all, when I was preparing the lecture, I hunted my own loaves of those slides that I had taken. It's the only record I have.

A lot of the work is gone. And it really kind of gave me a kind of... I got a kind of lump in my throat. I saw all the stuff that I had done and wondered what... Essentially I would really like to see what those paintings look like.

One of the paintings that I... I remember a friend of mine had this. And I saw it about four years ago. And I just looked at it and thought to myself, gosh, I could never do that.

I could never paint that again. Not because I'm not daring, but because in some sense I'm somewhere else. But somehow it brought it all... The slides kind of brought it all back.

In a sense I've experienced a kind of mourning, a sense of mourning. That I don't see my children anymore. But for me it was very important to continue making art.

And all the time, all the while that I was in teaching, I had a very... Up until the time I came to the office, I was very active as a painter. And then for a while I switched to photography because it was something I could take and leave. I could take a picture with it, and give it lots of credit.

And then it was only about three years before I retired that I began to build. I went back to watercolors. I don't know if any of you know but my mom's works were outside of the building.

I was still a kid at this point. I remember looking at the art supplies, looking at the mixer on the watercolor tubes. And to me they just seemed like candy.

I just had the desire to get into... And I got the best grade immediately. I could rely on them. I think to myself when I was buying... Gosh, when I was a student I could never afford these.

But I said, no, I really can't afford them. And sometimes the colors were exquisite. Cobalt turquoise.

It just sort of wetted my appetite for painting. So I did get that. My wife was participating in an art school show in Virginia.

Sort of on the far end of the West, but she said, I'm just coming home. And there was somebody that was introducing a technique of colors that was quite different than what we used earlier. It was a technique involving very thin applications of gouache.

It put a lot of time to go on. So I sort of, with the help of a different technique, I kind of got myself back into it. And looking at the images I was doing in the 60s, I sort of now had the side view of it.

Maybe I ought to go back to one or two of these. How those images were translated. So it still works.

In fact, I'm going to have a... I'm going to be in a show with two other people. Maybe in the summer, maybe in the month. We'll see.