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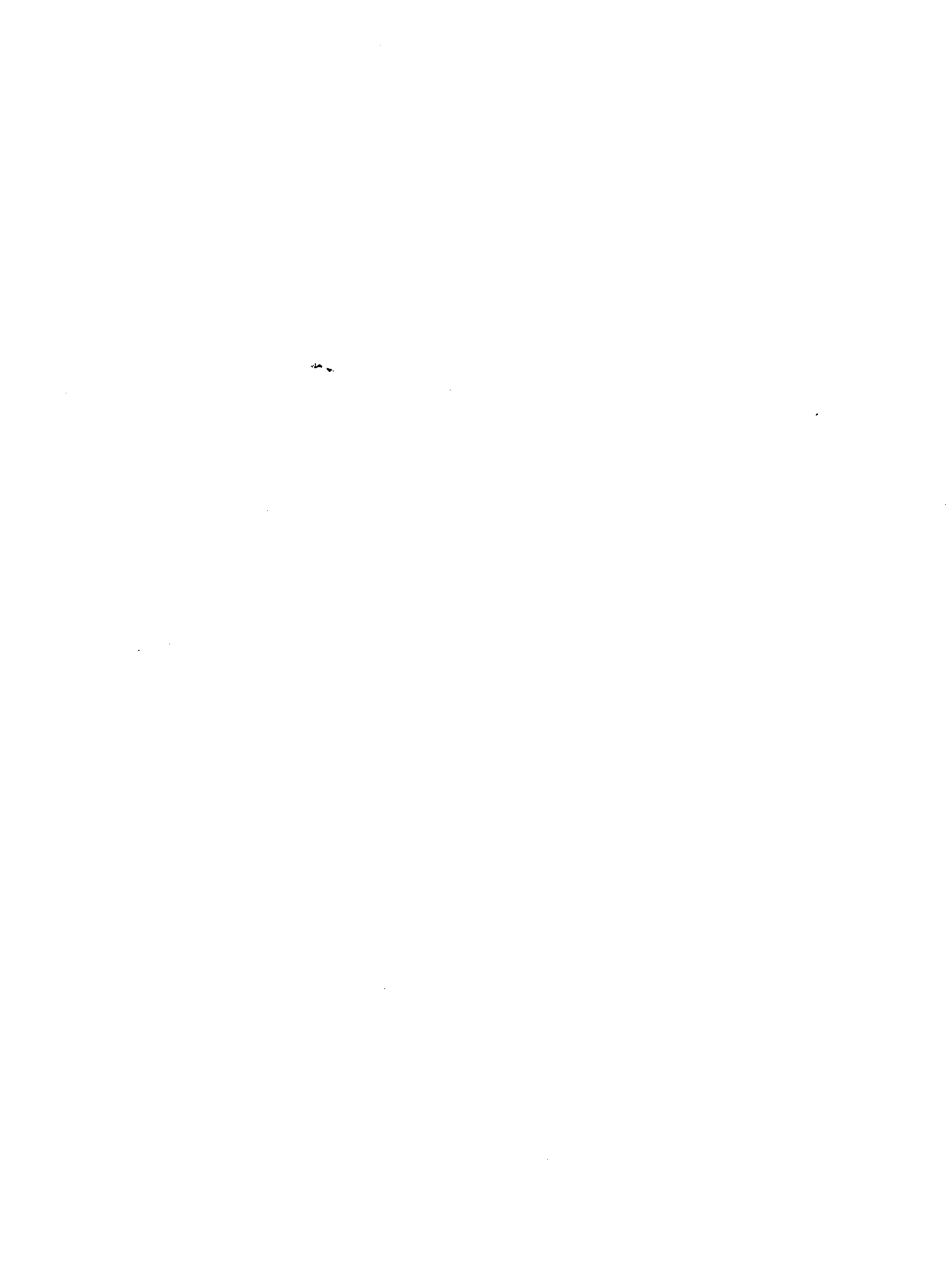
**Improving visual arts programs for Navajo students through  
discipline-based art education**

**Beeshligaiiyitsidi, Roberto Randall, II, M.A.**

**The University of Arizona, 1985**

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IMPROVING VISUAL ARTS PROGRAMS FOR NAVAJO STUDENTS  
THROUGH DISCIPLINE-BASED ART EDUCATION

by

Roberto Randall Beeshligaiiyitsidi, II

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF ART  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
WITH A MAJOR IN ART EDUCATION  
In the Graduate College  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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V. Lanier  
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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father,  
Robert R. Smyth, Sr., and brothers, Ray and Raymond Smyth.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be an impossible task to list all those persons who assisted me in the completion of this Master's thesis. I extend my appreciation to all who contributed directly or indirectly to the progress of this thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis will promote an understanding of discipline-based art education in conjunction with some methods of Navajo culture for the purpose of teaching the visual arts.

How the Navajo child responds to natural objects, and to those objects of the Southwest he or she identifies as works of art, is shaped by the culture of the Navajo child.

The methods that the Native American teacher has already attained of the Navajo culture would exercise discipline-based art education and could provide a much-needed vehicle by which to converge the theoretical bases of the profession.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Parameters of Discipline-Based Art Education

Following the ideas developed by Harry S. Broudy in 1983 (Greer, 1984), the focus of discipline-based art instruction is art as a discipline within general education. The definition of discipline-based art education (DBAE) is derived from looking at the education end-in-view in terms of art for any adult, and then describing how such an end might be achieved. Adults educated in the visual arts should have available to them avenues of thought, understanding, and expression that reflect the structures of art as a discipline, just as they habitually use similar structures derived from other disciplines.

There are four parent disciplines: 1) aesthetics, 2) studio art, 3) art history, and 4) art criticism. Concepts, ideas, principles, and techniques derived from these disciplines of art constitute the content and instructional approaches of DBAE (Greer, 1984). The educational end-in-view is "educated adults who are knowledgeable about art and its production and responsive to the aesthetic properties of works of art and other objects" (Greer, 1984, p. 212). The level of sophisticated understanding of the visual arts

anticipated is likened "to the manner of thinking and acting generally ascribed to the prototypical aesthetician, artists, art historian, and art critics" (Greer, 1984, p. 214).

DBAE will most likely become part of general education because its structure resembles that of other discipline-based (mathematics or history) education. The knowledge of visual arts concepts and skills enables learners to perceive, interpret, and appraise the aesthetic properties of art images of human import.

The education end-in-view for the studio art approach is the adult with advanced skills in art with an awareness of art, art history, and art appreciation. The model is the studio artist. Discipline-based art approach has as its educational end-in-view the adult who has a sophisticated understanding of the visual arts, is "knowledgeable about art and its production and responsive to the aesthetic properties of works of art and other objects" (Greer, 1984, p. 212); the adult whose manner of thinking and acting resembles that of the prototypical artist, aesthetician, art historian, and critic.

Another difference in the two approaches is in sequencing. Since discipline-based art education is more comprehensive in its approach, sequencing becomes multi-dimensional: from simple to complex, from naive to sophisticated, and from birth to maturity.

Discipline-based art education is distinctly different from the approach that has dominated the field of art education for so many years. Some of the differences are not immediately apparent, however, and the discipline-based orientation is still in the process of clarification and definition (Greer, 1984). The use of educational evaluation is perhaps the aspect that distinguishes most dramatically between what is traditional and what is contemporary in art education.

Evaluation of student achievement is an essential aspect of a complete program of discipline-based art education. Subjects in the curriculum that are considered fundamental to the goals of general education are also considered to be worth evaluating. Evaluation need not thwart the educational process in any way, but when appropriately conducted can enhance and complement student learning by providing clear indicators of process.

#### General Education Thought and Stage Settings

Some works of art may offer few opportunities for critical interpretation; if, however, my thesis holds for at least most of those works of Native American art pieces which are particularly distinguished, then we can draw certain conclusions about critical reasoning. Critical reasons certainly cannot be probative in the fullest sense. A reason for advocating a certain interpretation of a play cannot

establish that interpretation to the exclusion of others. By the same token, we cannot assume that these reasons render more probable the interpretation they favor (Sharpe, 1983).

In the Western world, where mind has been separated from body, where man has been extracted from nature, where effect has been divorced from "fact," where the quest for, and focus upon, the manipulation and accumulation of things has led man to exploit rather than to respect and admire the earth and her web of life, it is not surprising that art would be divorced from the more practical affairs of business and government and the more serious matters of science and philosophy. In the Navajo world, however, art is not divorced from everyday life, for the creation of beauty and the incorporation of oneself in beauty represent the highest attainment and ultimate destiny of man.

For the Navajo, beauty is not so much in the eye of the beholder as it is in the mind of its creator and in the creator's relationship to the created (that is, the transformed or the organized). The Navajo does not look for beauty--he generates it within himself and projects it onto the universe.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### History of Navajo Education

"Navajo" is a Spanish word, meaning a worthless piece of land or clasp knife or razor. "Navajo" is not what we call ourselves, but the "Diné," meaning "The People." This term is a constant reminder that we Navajos still developed a society in which each individual has a strong sense of belonging with the others who speak the same language and, by the same token, a strong sense of difference and isolation from the rest of humanity.

The origin of "The People," like the origin of life itself, is a mystery. Most anthropologists agree we came into the Southwest from northern regions of this continent. Philologists have identified the Navajo language as Athapascan, which is also used by Indians in western Canada. It has been made evident that Navajos can understand some words used by Native Indians of northern Canada today, and that some of the metaphors in Navajo came from the north.

A great deal has been written about the Navajo and has incorporated the writings into the majority American culture. The programs that are now underway to educate

Navajo children have been over a hundred years in development.

The terms of the treaty of 1868, concluded at Fort Sumner, between the U.S. Government and the Navajo Tribe provided that, for every thirty children between the ages of six and sixteen years, who could be considered to attend school, a house should be provided and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education should be furnished (Treaty between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribe of Indians, 1868, p. 6).

In 1868, a teacher was sent to Fort Defiance, Arizona, where she held classes in a one-room school provided by the U.S. Government. The attendance was poor due to the attitude of the parents. The Navajo never openly opposed the school, but were indifferent to the education of their children, since the ability to read and write served no practical purpose (Beatly, 1953).

In the early 1900's, several schools were built on the reservation; some were boarding schools and some were day schools. Boarding schools were unpopular because of the militaristic discipline and atmosphere. Day schools were impractical because of residential customs of the people. Most families had a permanent home, but during most of the year they moved from place to place with the sheep in order to provide better grazing. Buses were used to transport children who lived too far away to walk, but because of the

nature of the residence no permanent roads could be provided. Consequently, the education of the Navajo was an inconsistent process until about 1950.

World War II brought about a change in the Navajo's attitude toward schools and education. Many young Navajo men enlisted in the U.S. armed forces. Those Navajo men saw the United States outside their home area for the first time. Other Navajos left their homes to engage in industries supporting the war effort. These young people came home convinced that the ability to speak English and education were essential.

One of the significant developments of the past decades has been the awakening interest in our culture and language on the part of the Navajo people. The increasing emphasis has been placed on the "both-and" type of education which enables the Navajo student to learn positive aspects of both the Navajo culture and the white man's way. They are learning how to blend and combine these characteristics into a meaningful whole in which the total is greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, it is a case where two and two do not equal four, but, rather equal five!

As Navajo Tribal Chairman, Peter MacDonald has stated (Roessel, 1971, p. 117):

We Navajos stand on the verge of the 21st century, but our vision will be dimmed and our minds will be confused unless we take pride in ourselves as Navajos and as Americans. The future will not belong to those who ignore, ridicule or are ashamed

of the past, nor will the future belong to those who live only in the past. But rather, the future belongs to those who obtain their strength and their vision from the past and who, armed with that strength and vision, move boldly forward into an unknown tomorrow.

### Social Forces and Visual Art Education

As a group, the Navajo has relatively low educational attainment and inadequate family income, and generally has been outside of the mainstream of American life. An exploration of value orientations and demographic conditions which might inhibit the academic achievement of Navajo students is fundamental, "since education traditionally has played a major role in the development of economic and consensual bases of American society, despite diverse cultural groups" (Schwartz, 1971, p. 438).

Studies of cultural comparabilities have indicated that a language or mores, or any other part of a whole system of a culture developed by one group of human beings can be learned by those in another group. Paulsen (1961, p. 289) stated: "In fact, anthropologists have concluded that people can be shaped in almost any direction but questions remain chiefly in the area of 'control' and how far the direction of cultural growth might be determined by educators or anyone who presumes to teach children." Paulsen (1961, p. 294) explained:

Essentially, if the educator should attempt to change society, the tack would be that of teaching different values, even though many values lie

beneath the realm of consciousness. And if education can proceed with willful recognition that new conditions of life may be met and new patterns of culture emerge through understanding the real importance of how man thinks and feels rather than how he behaves, there may be a greater correlation between the objectives of education and the achievement of the pupil.

Values may be considered permanent and relative. Education becomes the means whereby values might be recognized for what they are, and educators become the agents of interaction in promoting the acceptance of values, which might afford the establishment of a better society in which to live (Paulsen, 1961, p. 295).

#### Native American Indian Art

The first half of the 1970's saw the breakthrough of a dynamic new art force which had been gathering momentum throughout the 1960's. After almost a century of being bundled together under the mass ethnic label of "Indian Art," certain artists have emerged as singular entities, expressing both their individualism and their Indian heritage.

Until approximately one hundred years ago, Native American painting was a form of religious expression and a kind of shorthand used mainly to record personal and tribal histories. Some of its imagery could be traced as far back as the pictographs and petroglyphs on the boulders, rock shelters, and cliffs dotting the continent. Painting was part of a lifestyle in which art, refined by a keen sense of

the aesthetic, permeated every aspect of Indian life from birth to death. Then, under the pressures and stresses of their disintegrating world, Indian artists transformed painting into an expressive and vital art form. Individualistic artists, deeply rooted in the past, absorbed from the surrounding dominant culture many of the aesthetic elements of world art. Native American painting, a spiritual affirmation of Indianness, became the most innovative and creative of any of the forms of Native American Indian art (Silberman, 1978).

The complex process by which the artist transforms the act of seeing into a vision of the world is one of the consummate mysteries of the arts, one of the reasons that art is inseparable from religion for most tribal people. A bit less mysterious is the technique by which the vision becomes a tangible art object. Together, these two aesthetic activities--envisioning and then engendering a work of art--represent an important and powerful ritual. Art is one of the central ways by which mankind ritualizes experience and gains access to the ineffable--the "unspeakable"--through images and metaphors.

A stable culture is bound together by a mutual and pervasive way of seeing. The way in which a specific people envisions the world permeates every aspect of its lifestyle, activity, and mentality. One of the elements that makes a painting by an Indian an "Indian painting" is the way the

artist sees--and not simply what is seen. What is "Indian" about Indian painting is not the depiction of an Indian scene, but the mentality that underlies the whole process by which the work of art comes into existence. And that characteristic mentality is also capable of drastic and modernist change without any necessary loss of its "Indianness." Culture is dynamic. Tradition is also dynamic--not static (Highwater, 1981).

As the Oglala Sioux writer, Michael Taylor (1979), has pointed out in "Faces and Voices" (cited in Highwater, 1980, p. 20):

During the early decades of this century, private and parochial organizations and the federal government sponsored massive Indian educational efforts, often involving boarding schools. Disruptive of ordinary tribal life and sometimes brutal and insensitive to human needs, the schools notably failed in their initial purpose of eradicating Native languages, religions, and customs. What the schools did accomplish was to provide Native Indian people from divergent backgrounds with a means of communication, the English language.

Cultures can enrich each other through their influence on one another. Some see this activity as a sort of cultural plagiarism. As the masterful Hopi Indian artist, Fred Kabotie, said, "Today there are people who look at my work and they say that I am influenced by Picasso. And I say to them, No, it is Picasso who was influenced by the Hopis!" (cited in Highwater, 1980, p. 21). But this borrowing between different cultures need not be plagiaristic

if the influences are transformed by the mentality of a distinctive people into aspects of their own experience.

Through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was little Native Indian painting and sculpture to be seen in galleries and museums. Government policy, mandated by non-Indian society in the United States and ruthlessly carried out by agents, soldiers, missionaries, and teachers, was to assimilate the Native Indians as quickly as possible. All forms of Native Indian culture, including tribal art, lore, languages, and even spiritual beliefs, were discouraged and stamped out as impediments to the process of transforming Native Indians into "whites" who would meld into the American delusion of an international "melting pot."

About the same time in the Southwest, Pueblo and Navajo Indians began to experiment with pencils, crayons, and paper. Little is known about these earliest painters, but we possess some of their work, painted on wrapping paper, ends of cardboard boxes, and other scraps. Encouraged by a few sensitive anthropologists and trading-post proprietors, individuals began to emerge as "artists," a distinction that had not previously existed among Southwestern Native Indians, for whom art was an intrinsic part of daily life and not the creation of specialists.

By the 1960's, when the Indian Art Project conferences at The University of Arizona examined the future of

American Native Indian art, the stage was well prepared for a drastic new direction in Native American Indian artistic expression. The result, in 1962, was the founding of the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) in the same building in Sante Fe where Dorothy Dunn's Studio had ushered in a grand era of traditional Indian painting.

It is an error, however, to believe that "all" Indian painting and sculpture of the recent past is devoted to the contemporary idiom and that "all" Indian painters of value were trained by the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, for Indian art is highly divergent and has evolved in a great many different regions of North America. But there is simply no question that the Institute has turned out most of the important young Indian painters during the 1960's and 1970's (Highwater, 1980).

## CHAPTER THREE

### NATIVE AMERICAN INDIAN METHODOLOGY

#### Art as Communication

Anthropologists often state that art reflects the values of a culture, or that the function of art is to perpetuate the values of the society, or that it in some way serves social needs. If art has these social functions in addition to whatever individual psychological functions it may have for the artist, then what the artist puts into his productions must be in some way communicated to the other members of his society. If we are concerned with art not merely as a psychological expression of an individual, or as individual creativity, but as a sociocultural phenomenon, we are faced with a problem in communication. To regard art as communication is by no means new or unusual.

The more that is known about the circumstances in which an art form plays a role, and the reaction of the people to it, the more can be inferred as to the "message" which is being transmitted. If a reasonable inference can be made as to the meaning of the message in general, hypotheses concerning the meanings of its component parts (form meanings) can be supported insofar as they are consistent with overall meaning. For example, the meaning of the

Navajo chants for the people has been rather extensively explored; the message of the sandpaintings which are part of the ceremonies should be consistent with the function of this activity as well as with the premises of Navajo culture as a whole (Hatcher, 1974).

#### Navajo Sandpainting: Criticism

Sandpaintings are not something of and for themselves, but are a performance which continues for a period varying from one to nine days which is commonly referred to as a "Chant" or a "Sing." These words simply mean a combination of many ritualistic acts carried out in a fixed order. They include preparation, purification, and performance with and disposal of materials, all carried out with the greatest of care. Herbal medicine is gathered, used, and disposed of. Prayer sticks made of reed, decorated with paints, and accompanied by their prescribed feathers are prayed over and carefully deposited at places where the gods they invite to the ceremony will not fail to see them. Seeing them and noticing that all is in order, deities may not then refuse to accept the invitation proffered.

Sandpaintings are only one form in which this great power of the Chanter is expressed. What are the others? Above all things, a Chanter must be able to sing and his memory for song and music must be accurate. Every rite is accompanied with song; in fact, many rites are songs. "The

day," which is the last night of most ceremonies, refers to the entire night of song during which other rites become only insignificant. Hundreds of songs belong to the Shooting Chant. The Hall, though a major chant, is one of the shortest, and has 447 songs. Not only is song a major part of rite, and not only is it curative in itself, being like a "whole board" or bull-roarer, a gift from the Holy Ones, but it also furnishes the major aid to the Chanter's memory, and instructs him in the order of events.

Man experiences beauty by creating it. For the Anglo observer of Navajo sandpaintings, it has always been a source of some bewilderment and frustration that the Navajo "destroy" these sandpaintings in less time than they take to create them. To avoid this overt destruction of beauty and to preserve its artistic value, the Anglo observer always wants to take a photograph of the sandpainting, but the Navajo sees no sense and some danger in that. To the Navajo, the artistic or aesthetic value of the sandpainting is found in its creation, not in its preservation. Its ritual value is in its symbolic or representational power and in its use as a vehicle of conception. Once it has served that purpose, it no longer has any ritual value.

By showing and creating these Navajo sandpaintings with students, you can critique them (one of the components to DBAE), after your lessons in studio art. The definition stated by Greer (1984) of art criticism as acquiring the

skills and knowledge of the art critic means that educated adults can make and defend judgments about works of art. People with developed critical abilities are able to move beyond the description and interpretation of works of art and can present reasons for choices and decisions about the value of these works.

#### Criticism and Educational Connoisseurship

Art criticism is designed to sharpen visual skills, to help students become more articulate about the forms that constitute visual art and able to justify the judgments they make about art (Eisner, 1984).

Effective criticism, within the arts or in education, is not an act independent of the powers of perception. The ability to see, to perceive what is subtle, complex, and important, is its first necessary condition. The act of knowledgeable perception is, in the arts, referred to as "connoisseurship." To be a connoisseur is to know how to look, to see, and to appreciate. It is essential to criticism because, without the ability to perceive what is subtle and important, criticism is likely to be superficial or even empty. The distinction between the two is: connoisseurship is the art of appreciation; criticism is the art of disclosure.

There are other points to be made about criticism as an empirical undertaking. The word "empirical" comes from

the Latin empiricus, meaning "open to experience." Criticism is empirical in the significant sense that the qualities the critic describes or renders must be capable of being located in the subject matter of the criticism. The test is in its instrumental effects on the perceptions of works of art. It is not abstraction that one understands through criticism, but rather qualities and their relationship.

Another concept important to the art criticism process is that anything can be the subject matter. By criticism, I do not mean the negative appraisal of something, but rather the illumination of something's qualities so that an appraisal of its value can be made (Eisner, 1979).

#### An Aesthetic View of Indian America

The study of aesthetics is based on the notion that the aestheticians deal with questions of the perception, understanding, and appreciation of objects which move or please us in ways that cannot be accounted for by studying their literal meaning. The acquisition of the thought processes of aestheticians, their procedures as they consider the question of how other levels of meaning are present in works of art, determines the sequences of instruction needed to acquire the lens of the discipline of aesthetics. This stage of attending to works of art is seen as establishing their aesthetic perception. Because this role of aesthetic

perception is basic to every domain of art, it follows that a major goal of discipline-based instruction is to provide conditions that can lead to aesthetic experience. In providing for aesthetic experience, discipline-based art education serves aesthetic education (Greer, 1984).

### Navajo Conception of Beautifying the World through Art

In the world of the Navajo, where mind and matter, thought and expression are inseparably connected, the aesthetic experience, the creation of beauty, is simultaneously intellectual, emotional, moral, aesthetic, and biological. Navajo life and culture are based on a unity of experience, and the goal of Navajo life, the creation, maintenance, and restoration of "hózhǫ́" (happiness), expresses that unity of experience. Hózhǫ́ expresses the intellectual concept of order, the emotional state of happiness, the moral notion of good, the biological condition of health and well-being, and the aesthetic dimensions of balance, harmony, and beauty. In Navajo art, we find all of these concepts, states, and conditions expressed.

The separation of mind and body or, in the popular idiom, mind and heart, in Western metaphysics has led aesthetic analysis and interpretation into confusion as to what it is that the artist expresses in his work. Experience is divided into fragments which relate to the intellectual realm, the emotional realm, and the aesthetic realm. A

major question, then, is whether a particular art work expresses an "idea," whether it expresses the emotions and feelings of the artist who created it, or whether it expresses nothing in the way of ideas or emotions and simply possesses significant and aesthetic form, a pure expression of beauty.

Navajos take little interest in the display or preservation of their works of art, with the exception of silver and turquoise jewelry. They readily sell them to non-Indians who are looking for beauty in things. Traditionally, they put their works of art to practical use in their daily activities. Now, it is more practical to sell them for money and buy stainless steel pots and other more durable but less artistic things. This practice offends the purist's view of aesthetics, but it is, in fact, not a depreciation of aesthetic value at all. It is simply based on the idea that beauty is a dynamic experience in conception and expression, not a static quality of things to be perceived and preserved (Witherspoon, 1977).

Among the languages of American Indians there is no word for "art." For Indians, everything is art--therefore, it needs no name. No matter how well-informed a spectator may be on the techniques of the arts or the many aspects of an alien culture, if someone does not experience an aesthetic relationship to what is by him or her, all the information and education will not permit that person to cross

the distance that exists between different peoples and, for that matter, between different individuals of the same technological society. Art puts us in touch with "the other"; without art we are alone.

Artists all over the world have always known that art is fundamentally a way of seeing. Art, like matter-of-fact reality, has a real existence within all of us, even though it seems to exist in the imaginal world. Artists are among the very few people in Western civilizations who have been permitted to deal with this visionary reality as something tangible and significant. The techniques and styles created by artists are not invented in order to be "original," but, contrarily, they are the means by which they achieve something almost impossible: to provide for others the personal visions they have as artists.

In the dominant society, people are asked to rely as little as possible on individual vision. In fact, if we rely too heavily upon it and depart too much from our acceptable cultural framework we are likely to be regarded as peculiar or dangerous. We may be considered dangerous because our experiences do not parallel those of our peers. Only the contemporary artist is allowed to look at the world in terms of an individual vision rather than in terms of his or her "culture eye."

Art is a way of seeing, and what we see in art helps to define what we understand by the word "reality." We do

not all see the same things. Though the dominant societies usually presume that their vision represents the sole truth about the world, each society (and often individuals within the same society) sees reality uniquely. The complex process by which the artist transforms the act of seeing into a vision of the world is one of the consummate mysteries of the arts, one of the reasons that art is inseparable from religion and philosophy for most tribal peoples. This act of envisioning and then engendering a work of art represents an important and powerful ritual. Making images is one of the central ways by which humankind ritualizes experience and gains personal and tribal access to the ineffable--the unspeakable and ultimate substance of reality (Highwater, 1981).

Unquestionably, the first element of the Native arts of the Americas which strikes us is their concern with seemingly different subject matters than those of pre-modern Western art. Traditional Western illusionist concerns such as portraiture, landscape, genre, still life, and erotic love appear to be absent, at least in the manner to which we are most accustomed in the West. And yet, as we shall eventually see, all of these facets of Western art are, in fact, diffused in the Indian aesthetic, but in ways brilliantly unique and inventive. But such achievements are not visible to us unless we permit ourselves to see them (Highwater, 1983).

Native American Art Forms

This act of ritualization is a metaphoric process, whether we are speaking in terms of visual art and architecture or epic poetry and the performing arts. Art historian Herbert Read (1965) made an important observation about the primal way of making animal images, which reflects this ritual-making mentality (cited in Highwater, 1983, p. 73):

In such representations there is no attempt to conform with the exact but casual appearances of animals; and no desire to evolve an ideal type of animal. Rather from an intense awareness of the nature of the animal, its movements and its habits, the artist is able to select just those features which best denote its vitality, and by exaggerating these and distorting them until they cohere in some significant rhythms and shape, he produces a representation which conveys to us the very essence of the animal.

Read continued (cited in Highwater, 1983, p. 74):

Our axiom in art history should be: always expect a constant aesthetic factor; look for the external forces that transform it. If we are concerned with aesthetic sensibility, and not with irrelevant demands for pictorial realism, then we must be prepared to find as much aesthetic appeal in a Neolithic axhead or a predynastic Egyptian vase as in a cave painting from Altamira.

The Indian's close relationship with nature and his belief that dream and intuition, vision and hallucination are implicit aspects of reality (and not separate from it) provide him with a metaphoric sense of reality. But the Indian artist could be highly descriptive, as well as poetic and spiritual, in his approaches to subject matter. No

better example exists than the buffalo skin and muslin paintings which celebrate the exploits of warriors.

Native American Media and Technology:  
DBAE, Studio Art, and Art History

The part of disciplined-based art education involving studio practice defines the artist as a person who skillfully uses various media to make visual images that are metaphors for something of human import. The idea of drawing or painting scenes from nature that present feelings about the natural environment, for example, is a major studio undertaking that has occupied generations of artists.

Adults who can emulate the techniques used by the art historian will be able to appreciate and discuss works of art in their appropriate historical and cultural contexts. Understanding works of art requires recognition that many of them are created out of, and acquire their meaning at least in part from, particular historical or cultural circumstances. Art works exhibit common characteristics that make them part of a larger genre or style (Greer, 1984).

Our cursory overview of Native American cultural history has made it perfectly clear that change has been a constant and vital source of survival and evolution in the Western Hemisphere. It is true, of course, that formative process does not mirror the values or the historical forms of the kind of "progress" with which the West is very much

preoccupied, for, contrary to the European dogma, all societies do not necessarily move with the same rhythm nor in the same direction. But the uniqueness of Indian cultural dynamics must not be mistaken for stultification and immobility simply because change operates according to a different set of principles.

Examples of superb inventiveness among Native Americans are visible throughout the history of the Western Hemisphere. Take, for example, the remarkable developments in metallurgy, such as the discovery of platinum in Ecuador, a metal whose melting point is so tremendously high that modern Western technology mastered the art only a century ago, whereas the Indians of Ecuador were using a form of platinum at least eight hundred years ago.

The Indian had a very clear and firm attitude toward the importance of technology. In fact, until about 1850, the Indian world regarded the Western world as desirable largely because of its ability to supply trade goods. The superiority of whites was acknowledged only in a limited number of ways; whites were considered socially inferior, and in most technical operations, such as those related to subsistence, construction, and art, the Indians regarded their own knowledge and techniques as superior.

It is, therefore, a highly romantic misconception of the West to envision the Indian as a nontechnological denizen of the forest with a static and Stone Age culture. This

fabrication about the Indians may support the Western search for alternatives to its own terrifying technological dilemmas, but in no way does it reflect the real achievement of Indians and other primal people, which was one of producing a dynamic society in which a symbiotic relationship between technology and nature served the community without the irreversible deprecation of nature.

In the early sixteenth century, relatively few Indians lived in the Plains. It was not a preferred region. For one thing, the land made farming difficult and, for another, hunting on foot in the open country was exceedingly difficult. The cantankerous and ever-wild buffalo ruled the High Plains. But these great, burly beasts were not alone. Gradually, there also appeared an animal which had not been seen in the Americas since the Ice Age, when it became near extinct. It was the horse.

In the material culture of the Indians, the process of assimilating new techniques was an ancient practice. As a rule, Indians used whatever materials were most available to them: wood, buffalo hides, and clay. But availability was not a central aspect of Indian invention and technology. To the contrary, in total contrast to the romantic view of Indian mentality as complacent, Indian craftspeople expressed a great deal of interest in rare materials, which they eagerly sought. Intertribal trade had existed in the Americas for thousands of years; it was not invented and

brought to Indians by European traders. To the contrary, finished products as well as raw materials were carried vast distances and exchanged for various desirable local products.

In this way, the Indian craftspeople were well-prepared for the arrival of the white trader and his inventory of remarkable new materials and products. The wide variety of materials introduced by Europeans in some instances had a radical effect, being readily accepted by the Indians as more colorful than native equivalents, or better suited to their purposes. The range of cross-fertilization of Indian arts through European examples and raw materials is an immense subject, but a few important examples of both the positive and negative results of the impact of Western technology and materials on Indian arts and traditions will provide a glimpse into the longstanding and ongoing process of remarkable Indian inventiveness and cultural dynamics.

Improved methods of coloring glass also had a profound effect on Indian arts, usually one which was less pleasing to non-Indian taste. A very few traders, in the interest of modern commercial production, have persuaded Indians to use again the older native dyes (as in the case of some Navajo rugs), or have specially ordered glass beads in the older, subdued colors. However, in general, Indians will not employ either for their own use.

There has been a vital revival of traditional viewpoints and tastes among young Indians. Though the garish feathers of the Fancy Dancers of the Plains are not likely to become subdued, there are numerous groups of Indian dancers in the United States who have steadfastly and eagerly revived the older, more restrained colors and regalia of their tribal traditions.

Navajo weaving has a somewhat similar history to that of Puebloan pottery, except for the fact that the Navajo borrowed a weaving tradition from the Pueblo people, who had refined it over many centuries for their personal and religious use. Based on the use of cotton and the true loom, the art of weaving had probably reached the American Southwest by about the time of Christ, having originated, perhaps in northern Peru, two or three thousand years before it made its appearance in what is now called the Four Corners Area of the Southwest.

The Navajo did not begin to weave until about the 1700's, when they probably learned the skill from the Puebloan people of the Rio Grande region. Pueblo textiles remained essentially traditional and noncommercial, while Navajo weaving, which has no profound historical roots, became synonymous with Indian textiles, though it is an assimilated and highly commercial activity for the Navajo.

The point to be made here is that tradition and culture are, in every society and in every time of history,

structures which survive due to growth, change, and alien influences. Ethnicity is often a legendary quality, suggesting profound aboriginal sources which do not really exist. Take, for example, the notion of "Jewish food," which is in no way related either to the Holy Land or to the Judaic diet of ancient Palestine. Tradition is a created and often borrowed phenomenon which provides the distinctive flavor of a particular people through a thoroughness of assimilation and acculturation. The American Indian, like all peoples, is the product of a constantly changing technology, internally invented and also borrowed from external sources. What finally makes Indian art "Indian" is the mentality which transforms new and imported materials and techniques into an expression of a distinctive cultural world view (Highwater, 1983).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Implications of DBAE for Native American Teacher Education

The format of art teacher preparation programs requires courses in art studio, art history, general education, and liberal arts. Each is perceived as a discrete entity. More often than not, it is assumed that students are reasonably well-versed in the content and skills of each of these disciplines. The methods courses in art education attempt to orchestrate these bits and pieces into a cohesive whole, providing a much needed synthesis. This synthesis, if it occurs, provides the basis for understanding what to teach and how to teach art in the schools (Lovano-Kerr, 1985).

Changes in a number of required courses and course content in art education for preservice classroom teachers are also implied by the discipline-based approach to art teaching. Since classroom teachers provide art experience for the majority of students in this country, their preparation for this task is of critical concern. The one or two art methods courses required for preservice classroom teachers hardly prepare them to present a quality art program. Increasing the number of courses substantially may be

an impossible goal, since that decision rests with another program. Eventually, with the recognition and acceptance of art as a discipline, there may be a willingness on the part of teachers' preparation programs to add an additional art course requirement to their program (Lovano-Kerr, 1985, p. 22).

Considering suggestions and recommendations for changes in art and classroom teacher preparation programs, the question of how viable these are, given the current structure in higher education, is a reasonable one to ask. The answer is not simple. We need to look at the forces at work to determine how feasible it is for change to occur (Lovano-Kerr, 1985, p. 22).

Higher education will be central to the success of any effort to improve education in the arts for all Americans. Our higher education efforts in the arts need assistance and cooperation of all other elements of our arts and education enterprise in order to be effective in serving the nation's expanded needs in the development of basic literacy in the arts. As is the case in the elementary and secondary schools, required changes may lead to the redeployment of certain resources. It will be necessary to provide a better education in the arts for all prospective future teachers (Lovano-Kerr, 1985, p. 23).

### Considerations for Teacher Training

Change in teacher preparation is inevitable. The Reagan administration's policy and practice on Native Indian affairs questions Indian education as a trust responsibility. Confusion and uncertainty cloud the future of Native Indian education. The immediate effects have been fewer special teacher training programs for Native Indian people and less activity at the school level. Overall, the progress made in Native Indian education during the 1960's and 1970's is now suspended.

In the broader view, there has been an increased emphasis on the quality of education in this country. "Excellence" has become the key word in the call for quality of education by the President of the United States and by professional education organizations, state governors, legislators, and state departments of education; and schools at all levels have also advocated for change. Among the concerns of these groups are: higher expectations for students and teachers; higher standards for high school graduation; higher admission criteria into colleges and universities; emphasis on math, science, computer literacy, arts, and humanities; emphasis on teacher training; improving teaching as a profession; accountability of teacher education programs through teacher proficiency or competency exams; and merit pay for teachers.

The past experience indicates a need for special graduate teacher education programs. Without them, teachers of Native Indian students cannot become adequately prepared. Logic suggests providing teacher training after the teacher has made contact with the Native Indian student in a school setting. At this point, the teacher-student relationship becomes a reality for the teacher (Tippeconnic, 1983).

The real issue becomes not only the content of the training, but the delivery system. The training must be provided in a way that is meaningful and beneficial to the teacher. There are several ways the task may be accomplished.

Consider the total picture of education and relate it to the situation of Native Indian students. To facilitate learning, the National Education Association (Tippeconnic, 1982, p. 11), in "Excellence in Our Schools: Teacher Education," reported that major functions of teaching are:

1. To know the unique characteristics of students and draw on this knowledge to promote learning.
2. To identify student's level of achievement in subject matter and provide instruction and activities appropriate to those levels.
3. To identify student learning problems and provide instruction for overcoming them.

4. To identify student interests and use them to promote learning.
5. To work with students individually when appropriate.

These functions depend on the professionalism of teachers and on their recognition of the current effort to improve the teaching profession and their commitment to be a part of that DBAE movement.

Art instruction has been used to promote reading skills, to stimulate creativity in other disciplines, and to inculcate democratic principles and moral behavior. The search for semantic equivalents for the art experience and art's perceptual properties is also an attempt to place art education within the mainstream of conceptual, verbal education. Considering the extent to which cognitive disjuncture permeates Western society and the resulting benefits for conceptual thinking, it is not surprising that right-left brain research has found ready enthusiasts among some art educators. The research provides, ostensibly, a scientifically verified physical location for non-verbal behaviors that some educators believe can be used to justify art study. Whether such research will legitimize non-verbal learning in the assumptions of Western society and, hence, in educational practice is still unclear (Hamblen, 1983).

The teacher's role is to make corrective moves to increase the student's capacity for aesthetic discerning.

Engaging in this process involves endless hard work for teachers. A continuous exercise of patience and detached, yet compassionate, professionalism is required whenever one enters into direct in-depth, one-to-one interaction with students. The teacher of art appreciation should be an exponent of qualitative understanding based on experience. It is not enough to be an informer of knowledge gained from reading. The experiential dimension adds a level of depth and force to the dialog which is essential. Aesthetic discerning does not grow out of dry, authoritative, argumentative teaching. Rather, such discerning develops from teaching based on true conviction and sensitivity. Most importantly, it develops from inspirational interaction with students (Johansen, 1982).

Since any curriculum is dependent upon the instructional purposes it supports, an initial criterion for content selection must stipulate the end-in-view for which learner activity is mobilized. The traditional distinction between intrinsic and developmental purposes appears to be a valid starting point for deciding this guideline stated by Lanier (1984):

1. To identify art content that will best present the knowledges and skills calculated to enhance our negotiation of objects we see aesthetically. By implication, it is that museum and gallery art is the sine qua non of aesthetic experience. All other

objects or visual phenomena can be regarded as inferior as a class. The justification for this assessment is that the fine arts are more abstruse and require more learning about than other less honorific art forms; sometimes it is that the fine arts deal with nobler thoughts and feelings than the others.

2. To examine aesthetic response to all visual phenomena, including natural objects, popular arts, commercial and industrial forms, as well as the fine arts.
3. To center the content on artifacts well within the cultural milieu of the learners. To concentrate on the learner's own present environment, that of using esoteric artifacts from exotic cultures to develop what is called cross-cultural learning, which at times is itself difficult to fully understand.
4. To use content from the literature of aesthetics. The content of aesthetics is largely theoretical rather than empirical, and interpretation is a matter of belief or reason.
5. To structure the content of art curriculum so that it moves from the familiar to the unfamiliar; to move from simple to complex material, so that the learner progresses from naive to sophisticated insight.

6. To deal with the contemporary arts whenever possible. The contemporary arts are those that will loom largest on the horizon of any level of student. Knowledge about those objects is essential and practical for the enhancement of aesthetic experience to a level appropriate to those who share the good things of the society in which they live.
7. To employ as models for study an adequate number of forms of art other than drawings, paintings, and sculpture. Other areas such as jewelry, fibers, furniture design, glass, clay, metal, and others have only recently attained a proper equity with the older expressive arts. Their use as objects is to be studied with care and affection to nurture that equity. It is also useful for the learner to realize that, with specific variances deriving from function or technique, much of the same formal elements and relationships, the potential for expressiveness, and art skills of all sorts, structure all of these forms of art.
8. To select material for curriculum content relevant to the largest portion of the learner group. Recognition of differences of instructional significance involved in some art behaviors among individuals in any sort of grouping, for example, the spread between divergent and convergent thinking

hypothesized by the research on creativity, may not only have merit, but relevance to art making.

### Implications of the Study

The following implications and inferences are based on the analysis of the results of the study. These implications could prove useful to teachers, principals, curriculum/instruction personnel, superintendents, and boards of education who have a concern and responsibility for the academic achievement of Navajo students:

1. Expanded avenues for communication and self-expression.
2. Respect for originality in one's own creative expression, and sensitivity and responsiveness to the expression of others.
3. Skills in craftsmanship for effective expression in the arts.
4. Ability to use the arts to synthesize one's feelings about objective facts.
5. Aesthetic sensitivity.
6. Appreciation for the contribution the arts have made in this and other cultures, both past and present.
7. Intellectual bases for making and justifying aesthetic judgments based upon understanding of the nature, structure, and meaning of the arts.

8. Appreciation of the role of creativity in human achievement.
9. The capacity to experience aesthetic qualities in the environment.
10. Special talents and interests in the arts and occupational skills in the arts and art-related fields.

Art can also be a basis for learning about people who are quite unlike ourselves; when we value art from other cultures, we have reasons to value the peoples who produced the art forms because they have made a contribution to our pleasure and to world civilization.

Another important thing that art does for all of us is the way it changes our world by bringing us into contact with new forms and ideas (Silverman, 1982). Implementation goals include (The Getty Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts, (1985):

1. To extend and deepen participants' knowledge and appreciation of art through the study of specific works of art and the connections and contexts that place them within the world of art and everyday living.
2. To confirm and extend participants' knowledge and use of discipline-based instruction by providing opportunities for them to share ideas and resources for conducting instruction.

3. To assist district teams in implementing district-wide programs of discipline-based art instruction by providing technical assistance, results of observations, and art expertise.

Implementation activities include a variety of activities contributing to the accomplishment of the above goals (The Getty Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts, 1985):

1. Renewal meetings in which participants learn more about art and share ideas.
2. School-staff orientation meetings.
3. Field trips to museums.
4. Establishment of school art galleries.
5. Participation in community art exhibits.
6. Publication of an Institute Information Bulletin.

#### Conclusions

A people's world view constitutes a basically intellectual view of reality, whereas a people's ethos expresses the behavioral themes and value orientations that are implicit in and derived from the world view. Given our view of the world as expressed in the symbols of language, arts, and ritual, we Navajos find our way of life not only to be an appropriate adaptation to the world as it is portrayed in the world view, but also to be absolutely necessary to survival.

Navajo art thus expresses Navajo experiences, and Navajo experiences are mediated by the concepts of, and orientations to, the world found in Navajo culture. All experiences are directed toward the ideals of Hózhǫ́, and Hózhǫ́ is the intellectual, moral, biological, emotional, and aesthetic experience of beauty.

A Navajo experiences beauty most poignantly in creating it and in expressing it, not in observing it or preserving it. The experience of beauty is dynamic; it flows to one and from one; it is found not in things, but in relationships among things. Beauty is not to be preserved, but to be continually renewed in oneself and expressed in one's daily life and activities. To contribute to and be a part of this universal Hózhǫ́ is both man's special blessing and his ultimate destiny.

Far from estranging the Native American artist from his or her culture, his or her new freedom of expression has given him or her an increased respect for his or her heritage and creativity. Thus, the conclusion feared through the Native American Indian artist's exposure to new approaches and new techniques has not come to pass.

We art educators may ask of any ideology of art education whether its assumptions about the place of art in the good life is both intellectually defensible and compelling, considerations which most certainly would involve inquiry into its concepts, not only of a worthwhile life, but also of

the nature, meaning, function, and value of art. We may further ask whether its beliefs about the real, the true, and the good are internally coherent, consistent, and congruent with the institutional arrangements and teaching methods recommended by the ideology that is intended to produce certain kinds of outcomes. Perhaps Native American Indians now need to direct comparable critical concern to purported theories of art education. When this happens, perhaps fascination with image will give way to respect for serious and systematic thought (Smith, 1983).

#### What Elements Does a New Model Require?

In an earlier context, one of us claimed that, "if we are to build programs in aesthetic education that are both scholarly and democratic, we'll have to learn how to think in other categories--that is, we must learn how to work at least part of the time in modes of thought other than our own" (Ecker, 1970, p. 21). Also indicated was a belief that new strategies needed to be worked out which are "capable of relating the work of scholars and teachers, artists and students, education specialists and administrators" (Ecker, 1970, p. 21). To this list we would now add entrepreneurs, politicians, parents, art administrators, social workers, psychologists, sociologists, historians, and any other group involved in an arts education program--and, hence, in a new educational context. One might complain

that it is difficult enough to think clearly in one's own categories. But we have concluded that the radical proposal cited can generate a model for evaluation that draws together perceptions of an educational program from all its participants, that displays these perceptions in a nonhierarchical pattern, and that provides strategies of analysis that allow evaluators from different fields and perspectives to share their thoughts as well as follow these lines of thought toward possible convergence.

The artistic and scientific strategies employed in this model take evaluation beyond the discipline-bound restrictions of some types of multidisciplinary evaluation and, we believe, help to make it particularly appropriate for arts education programs. Yet, we have adhered to standard criteria by which evaluations are judged. Because the model relates qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluation (including phenomenological, naturalistic, and rationalistic methods), each evaluation is reviewed by all educators (Ecker and Baker, 1984).

#### Art Education for Social and Cultural Awareness

Like the progressive trust that emphasizes the importance of the child, art education for social and cultural awareness puts art in an instrumental status. Art becomes one of the subject matters students study in order to understand cultural values and the social sources of

power. Art educators who focus on developing social and cultural awareness not only aim to enable students to understand how these images are visually constructed, but also how they serve the interests of groups who control those images.

Art education in this mode also shares an affinity with the less political but important concerns for developing "visual literacy." Although art educators embracing this view are also interested in social and cultural awareness, they place considerably less emphasis on the political nature of the message; their aim is to develop the student's ability to critically read visual form rather than to become hypersensitive to the political content of its message.

Art education for social and cultural awareness can have, as it were, two utterly different emphases. One emphasis, as already indicated, is to help students to learn how and why visual message systems are formed. The point, overall, is to help students become increasingly critical of the ways in which vested interests are served and how small groups of individuals manipulate and manage the population at large through various forms of control: advertising, architecture, product design, and the like. At the other end of the spectrum, the effort is to help students adapt to rather than alter the culture. The task of art education is to use art to inculcate socially acceptable values (Eisner, 1984).

The training of teachers for American Indian students is no easy task. Many factors influence the teacher-student relationship; quality teacher training will not occur just because it is advocated or required. We face a major challenge to take what we have learned from past educational efforts, to use this knowledge to resist policies of de-emphasizing Indian education. Finally, we must develop a strategy for future teacher training premised on active acknowledgment of an Indian education presence in teacher training efforts.

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