

**Tiffany Searcy**

**January 13, 2012**

**Lesson 1 Reading Review: Engaging Post-Modern and Critical Theory**

**Summary of Main Ideas:**

For over a century, art education persisted as the area of student learning constrained by studio art practices. In contemporary times, art education has evolved into an innovative platform for exploratory analysis and development, critical thinking, constructive and diplomatic dialogue, and an intuition which promotes self-awareness and contextual interpretations based on contemporary social, environmental, and cultural ideas. Contemporary art scholars, Doug Blandy, Olivia Gude, and Patricia Stuhr investigate a dynamic range of art education practices which encourage affective and comprehensive learning. Gude (2003) emphasizes the cultural impact of becoming self-aware in a democratic environment; she explains, “our responsibilities to democratic society begin as individuals who perceive fully, consciously integrate our perceptions into complex constructions, and habitually act on the basis of our deepest awarenesses” (p. 2). Building on Gude’s theory, Stuhr (2003) further suggests art educators “assist students in discovering the possibilities and complexities of understanding life and death [to afford] new ways to actively participate in a world that reverences life and values social justice” (p. 312). For Blandy (2010) he believes sustainability is a direct correlation to the quality of life of a community. What occurs socially, economically, and environmentally factors into the cultural attributes of the society at a local, regional, and global level.

Through an integrated and multi-faceted curriculum, art educators have the flexibility to build and facilitate life lessons out of thought provoking classroom discussions and activities. Through encouragement, students may utilize their democratic voice to identify diverse societal and cultural perspectives through the development of one’s self. By becoming self-aware, students have the power to maintain a sustainable life occupied with social and cultural awareness. While these scholars focus their attention on specific issues in art education, each educator views art education as a fundamental part to the school-wide curriculum, and values the impact art education has on the individual.

**Terms/Key Concepts:**

Doug Blandy’s (2010) lecture outlines the benefits of art education for a contemporary society. Throughout his lecture, he stresses the significance of providing an art education

curriculum for students which will encourage *sustainably*. His goal is to pave the road for future generations. He believes “art education is a systemic and extensive network within which children, youth, and adults make and learn about material culture” (Blandy, 2010). Material culture represents a community’s cultural heritage or way of life. Through the *active* participation of the community, he believes they will establish necessary connections between their city plans and economic strategies. These connections are vital in shaping and addressing social, political, and environmental needs for the region. By addressing these issues around *sustainability* through a *participatory culture*, art educators can “bring to students' attention a plethora of images, objects, and actions that are being created to respond to environmental concerns” (Blandy, 2010).

Olivia Gude (2009) encourages art educators to involve students in conversations about *self-awareness*. She believes the development of self is vital to establishing the necessary connections between the student and the democratic society in which they live. Through the exploration of the self, students gain new ideas and understandings. This obtained knowledge grants students the ability to participate in society through *democratic dialogue*. As *democratic dialogue* develops, students find personal meaning to life’s experiences. Involvement in the process of art-making provides students with an artistic voice in a democratic society. It is through these descriptive words and images that students speak to their own personal expression. Their creative response is a direct parallel to the uniqueness of their life and cultural familiarities. These experiences ultimately shape students’ perceptions of the world. Gude reports, “perceptions of reality...always involve the projection of self into and onto the world” (p. 4).

Patricia Stuhr (2003) argues for *social* and *cultural* justices to be integrated into the universal art education curriculum. Her article highlights her beliefs on “art education, like all subjects, should be connected intimately to students' lives; therefore curriculum because of this connection to student life and their worlds should be thought of as an ongoing process and not a product” (p. 302). Through the inclusion of *cultural* and *social* issues, Stuhr suggests that art can become the necessary link that aids the students in finding meaningful insight into the contemporary world in which they live.

### **Critical Response/Application/Personal Reflection:**

The three authors collectively create a comprehensive argument for developing an art education curriculum that will advance sound minds to actively engage in discussions about self-

relevance in terms of individual social surroundings. I believe it is essential to involve students in discussions about self-awareness, while also encouraging them to think beyond themselves - about issues that may affect their lives and communities down the road. In today's world we are such here and now people. Everything is instantaneous, and we tend to forget about the consequences that our actions have on ourselves and on our environments. A project that I would like to execute is actually a school wide activity that will encourage sustainability and reusability.

My goal would to involve the entire school in a local cleanup. Following the completion of the cleanup, I would have the students analyze the things they collected and brainstorm ideas to repurpose the items they found to better serve their community. They can use their imaginations to come up with a plan to manipulate the recycled goods into a sculpture garden for the community center.

A challenge that I see in executing a contemporary program is that this type of education is something different than what people are used to. Schools are diverse environments and people are set in their ways no matter how appealing technological advancements may look. I, however, believe that change means progress and demonstrates our ability to affectively learn as educators to be able to adjust our methods of teaching to better serve our students in their contemporary world. I believe active communication with all parties involved will be the most effective solution for moving forward in our contemporary art education practices.

**References:**

- Blandy, D. (2011). Sustainability, participatory culture, and the performance of democracy: Ascendant sites of theory and practice in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 52(3), 243-255.
- Gude, O. (2009). *Art education for democratic life* [NAEA Lowenfeld Lecture]. Retrieved from [http://www.arteducators.org/research/2009\\_LowenfeldLecture\\_OliviaGude.pdf](http://www.arteducators.org/research/2009_LowenfeldLecture_OliviaGude.pdf)
- Stuhr, P. L. (2003). A tale of why social and cultural content is often excluded from art education and why it should not be. *Studies in Art Education*, 44(4), 301-314.