

Tiffany Searcy
Contemporary Issues in Art Education
February 10, 2013

New Digital Media

Incorporating new digital media in art education has reshaped the ways in which students learn and process the information they see through visual culture. New digital media aims to address cultural and ethical influences (Delacruz, 2009), enhance visual language (Swan, 2005), build narratives (Rossman, 1998), and promotes awareness through critical observations and reflection (Colman, 2004). Through teacher guidance, digital media provides students opportunities to explore and to relate to the world around them. The relativity of visual media connects students to trends and ideas that are unique to the times. New digital media strives to allow students to creatively explore art in a digital framework. In addition, it encourages students to engage in network communities through collaborative projects, to which they share in group ideas, designs, and critical analysis.

This new medium stimulates students' senses and provokes inner responses to contemporary issues through online communities. As stated in, *From bricks to mortar to the public sphere in cyberspace: Creating a culture of caring on the digital global commons*,

virtual networks fulfill the elements of a community, that is, a sense of group identity and belonging, formation of relationships, need fulfillment, emotional shared experience, impact on members' lives, prevalence of specialized language, and the ability of the group to police itself (Delacruz, 2009, p.3).

However, while digital media lends itself to establish a sense of community with room for collaborative student work, "skeptics argue that virtual communities lack critical elements that define authentic, geographically based, communities," as well as, they infer "the Internet degrades friendship, kinship, civic involvement, and social capital" (Delacruz, 2009). Rossman (1998) cautions us to be mindful of the effects new technologies have on education curriculums. While he is an advocate for the inclusion of technology in the classroom, he urges art educators to not lose sight of the basic

principles of teaching and learning. By doing so, students can lose the “great narrative” which is needed to shape and guide the progress of their lives (Rossman, 1998).

Solutions to the New Digital Media Concerns

While there are numerous concerns over the effects digital media may have on our students’ learning capabilities, it is important for us to educate students utilizing the technologies of the time. Like Rossman, I believe it is important to create an enriching environment that nourishes the narrative of our students’ lives. Through the inclusion of digital media, students can become aware citizens of worldly issues. It is not so much to give the students opportunities to use digital networking sites; we much take their experiences a little further - by digging deeper to make the experiences meaningful. A way that we can do this is to connect to other groups in society using websites that encourage students to collaborate with students around the world. Using Skype or YouTube are great ways to do this. By facilitating opportunities for students to engage in learning activities while using digital media, students can gain life long memories, which will aid in the development of their “great narrative.”

Websites

<http://gallery.thecreatorsproject.com/gallery/Peace-Camp-Dunstanburgh-Castle-London-Festival-2012/6889001>

<http://learningthroughdigitalmedia.net/>

<http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/guide/using-digital-media-for-teaching-and-learning>

Projects

After reading Colman (2004), I started to think about how artists turn their traditional artworks into digital mediums just by taking a picture of their work and posting it in an online gallery. In considering this concept, I thought it would be interesting to do an assignment on identity, utilizing old books that are no longer being used. I would have the students create altered books on their personal identity through a journaling process – using an array of techniques and mixed-medias. Looking at Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/smwhite3720/art-journals/>) there are some fabulous ideas on how to get the students thinking about who they are. Through external influences from their social and cultural surroundings, students will develop a book that tells their story in a

visual form. When they complete their assignment, they will then photograph their books, posting a picture of each page on an online blog site, which will be connected to the school website. They will be required to align their book with text. This assignment will turn into a community project through an online gallery, which can be shared with their school, family, and friends.

In conjunction with this assignment, it would be interesting to collaborate with another school system. So often we see schools trying to connect around the world, I think it would be interesting for students to connect with other students who live in United States. Growing up in the North and then moving to the South when I started college, I experienced the differences that each location has had to offer. Each location has its own culture and its own way of life but in essence there are so many similarities. My goal for this assignment is for the students from both schools to connect through Skype and to share their independent art journals with one another. The students will be instructed to share their life experiences, the things they like to do, places they have gone, and special things about who they are as people. Typically, we become trapped by our own surroundings and it is helpful to hear other's life stories to understand where and how we fit into the world. In this context, the students from both regions will not only learn about another person, but will acquire a connection with someone else that lives on the other side of the country.

Making the Connection

The aims of these particular assignments align with the cultural and social themes of this course, Contemporary Issues in Art Education. In these assignments it is my goals to have students investigate self-identity in relation to the world in which they live. In creating this book, they are able to use words, images, and designs to represent who they are in terms of how they fit into their community. By connecting with a student from a different part of the country, they are learning a little bit more about the differences and life styles of people who live in the same country as they do. My ultimate goal for this assignment is to educate students to become self-aware, so they can relate to the world in which they live. This assignment also celebrates uniqueness and promotes creative expression, while also investigates social and cultural issues on a deeper and more personal level.

References

- Colman, A. (2004). Net.art and Net.pedagogy: Introducing Internet art to the digital art curriculum. *Studies in Art Education*, 46(1), 61-73.
- Delacruz, E. M. (2009). From bricks to mortar to the public sphere in cyberspace: Creating a culture of caring on the digital global commons. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(5).
- Goldsmith, N (2012). Using Digital Media for Teaching and Learning. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/guide/using-digital-media-for-teaching-and-learning>. [Last Accessed 13 February 10].
- Helali, Y. (2013). *Peace Camp 2012*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://gallery.thecreatorsproject.com/gallery/Peace-Camp-Dunstanburgh-Castle-London-Festival-2012/6889001>. [Last Accessed 13 February 10].
- Rossmann, M. (1998). Are our schools becoming emissaries for the values of the new technology. *Art and Academe*, 10(2), 31-44.
- Scholz, R.T. (2013). Learning Through Digital Media. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://learningthroughdigitalmedia.net/>. [Last Accessed 13 February 10].
- Swann, A. (2005). The role of media and emerging representation in early childhood. *Art Education*, 58(4), 41-47.
- White, S. *Art Journals*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://pinterest.com/smwhite3720/art-journals/>. [Last Accessed 13 February 10].