



## THE INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC VALUES OF THE ARTS

### Discussion Prompts:

#### Intrinsic Value of the Arts

- How are people in your community succeeding in creating an appreciation for the intrinsic and extrinsic values of the arts?
- What are they doing?
- Why is it working?

Many people at the summit believed that David Perkins' ideas about the "symbolic presence" of the visual arts offer an interesting way to talk about an important strength of the field.

- How do you react to his statements?
- What about Terry Peterson's view that the only way to be assured a role in American education is to be seen as a force for helping people to secure good jobs?

### Discussion Prompts:

#### Extrinsic Value of the Arts

*Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne recently suggested that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century truly arrived only in the last few months of 2008 with the global economic slump.

- As the United States seeks to retool for a better economic future, how essential a role do you think the arts can play?

At the Aspen Summit, former NAEA president Mary Ann Stankiewicz urged the association's leadership to stay closely aligned with membership so that it doesn't promise things that the field cannot deliver.

- Can the arts deliver on the kinds of expectations that Susan Sclafani talked about in her interview? How are the visual arts delivering on such promises in your community?

David Perkins speaks about the hard work involved in developing the creative abilities of our students.

- Who do you admire in your community for the ways they are developing students' creativity?
- What are they doing?
- And, why is it working?



## **TRANSCRIPTS (As Spoken)** **The Intrinsic Value of the Arts**

**Elliot Eisner: What Education Can Learn from the Arts (Video)** There is a lot that one can learn by studying what goes on in psychology, sociology and the sciences and social studies and history and so forth, but there is also a lot that can be learned from the arts as they're practiced and as they're taught that might find utility in these more academic fields if I can put it that way for a moment.

The idea that a legal brief can be a work of art is an idea that I accept. The aim of education is to prepare people who can function as artists in whatever arena they happen to be in. It's a very deep and demanding ambition. This state of affairs ought to pervade our schools so schools become, in effect, studios for making things that are beautiful.

There is so much in school where the uniformity of the outcome is the aspiration. In the arts, it's just the opposite. What you want is heterogeneity. You want diversity. You want idiosyncrasy. You don't want thirty yellow ducks made by thirty kids in the fourth grade all looking alike. That's an artistic pedagogical disaster. A spelling teacher doesn't want her students to be innovative. That's not the location for it. It's uniform. It's uniform. In art it's just the opposite.

The arts can teach people working in other fields, learning to express something often deals with what cannot be said. What cannot be said, learning to express what cannot be said. So let me--the basic message that I'm trying to get across is that--and we've said it in this group in the day and a half that we've been here--that what goes in to the arts in their making and in their perception is, when it's done well, very sophisticated forms of cognition. And since children learn what they have an opportunity to do, they ought to have an opportunity to paint, to see and to make things as beautifully as they can and the effective art teacher whether he is or she is in science or in the visual arts makes that kind of accomplishment possible. And, when it takes, it becomes a set of resources they can use for the rest of their life.

**David Perkins on Symbolic Presence and the Value of the Visual Arts (audio)** I was just thinking about our kickoff question, what's distinctive about the visual arts? There's something that's been nagging at me that I'm not sure has gotten on the table. And I don't know, just to give it a name, you could call it symbolic presence, which is just a light bulb. But it's awfully important in my experience messing around with, say, using art, thinking skills and this kind of thing that you have a rich object that is present.

I think the visual arts are better at that than anything else actually because a good work of art, whether it's something that from the past or whether it's something that you're constructing is there. It's present. It's surveyable by the people around you.



They can all look at it. They can all think about it. And it's a deliberate condensation point of all sorts of stuff packed into this object. It's symbolically rich. This makes it great for shared conversation, for speculation, for testing ideas because the object is present, you can say, "Let's look. Is that really there?" This symbolic presence of the visual arts is such that you do not find so much in history because it isn't present. It also isn't characteristic of the other arts so much.

**Terry Peterson on the Importance of Being Seen as Developing Job Skills (video)** I know you hate playing in the job field, the work force, but you've got to play in that field. People are so concerned now about their own economic well-being and their kids and grandkids that to say we aren't going to play there because we're working on a different dimension, you're aren't going to play.



**TRANSCRIPTS (As Spoken)**  
**The Extrinsic Value of the Arts**

**Scott Shanklin-Peterson on Major Corporations' Views (audio)** Foreign companies are coming in and buying up U.S. companies and from one direction that might be because the dollar was cheaper. But they were talking about how they were buying up major, major companies betting on the fact that the imagination, the innovation and creativity of this country will continue where its not going to be at the same level in other countries. So they are investing here based on what they are finding with innovation and creativity. So, they're making those decisions based on what we're doing right.

**Susan Sclafani on America's Corporate Leaders (video)** Business leaders believe that success in America depends on children getting what they need from things like the arts. The business community understands that the current education system is not going to create young graduates with the expertise in the various subjects, or more important the creative spirit, the entrepreneurial spirit to connect ideas in interesting ways.

**Susan Gabbard Framing Questions about Creativity and Learning (audio)** How much can we take what we learn in one area and is it transferable? Are creativity and imagination transferable? Can you be creative in one area that you are strong in and maybe not so creative in another?

**David Perkins on Using the Arts to Develop Creativity (audio)** Question, does visual arts learning develop creativity? Answer—in my view, on the whole, no, especially when it's business as usual visual arts learning and especially if we're talking about creativity beyond the context of visual arts. Second question—however, is visual arts learning a particularly good platform for developing C, C is for creativity? Actually, I'd like to say yes in potential because of something we talked about before, this quality of symbolic presence, the compressed character and the presence of the work, which creates a whole bundle of opportunities around it. So, third question, how can visual arts learning best develop creativity? I'll move on to some broad ideas around that.

Okay, so some critical contrasts about this enterprise of developing creativity through the visual arts—first and foremost, avoid magical thinking. That is to say, don't imagine that just because learners are involved in visual arts experiences this is somehow developing creativity. Second thought, treat creativity specifically as a matter of generative boundary transgressions, and not just fine craft. When we look at the arts and other disciplines and we identify something as creative, it virtually always involves some kind of boundary transgression, a barrier stepped over, a mask



penetrated or what have you that has proved to be generative. And that's a concept of creativity that isn't just sort of vague and flowery and so forth.

Third, critical contrast, treat creativity as dispositional, not just a skill set. Our thinking in education and in our culture tends to be abilities centric and tends to view things as all about ability. But it's quite clear that creativity involves passion, adventurousness, risk-taking and so forth and so on, and these as for instance Lois has foregrounded in *Studio Habits of the Mind*. These kinds of things are dispositional traits, and fourth cultivate understandings in action of creativity not just intellectual understandings.

In other words, when we learn to be more creative, we are not just becoming able to write a more sophisticated essay about the nature of creativity and moves to make. We are rather acquiring a set of behavioral dispositions that move us into action in engaging the various problems and opportunities we face. So much for critical contrasts. Now with those in mind, what might one do?

If we want to teach creativity through the visual arts, first we would want to pick the kind of art we focus on for the creativity agenda. It's simply not so that any genre you might work in or any genre you might engage as a viewer is going to be equally suitable for this particular agenda although there are many other agendas that are going to be pursued for all sorts of reasons.

Second, foster threshold experiences of creativity in art. Threshold experiences are learning experiences that help you get the hang, the basic feel, and the basic trajectory of an enterprise. Third, treat creative looking as well as creative making. For instance, creative looking would mean on the one hand looking at works of art and other things imaginatively, but also looking for the creativity in them, the boundary breaking that they do. Fourth, through reflective abstraction draw out and generalize understandings in action of creativity. In other words, don't just let the experiences, the threshold experiences, sit there. Wrap them in an exploratory process of reflection; what's going on here, why is it happening, what are the strong moves I'm making? And finally, bridge creativity beyond the visual arts. Research on transfer of learning which Ben mentioned shows that transfer is not a free lunch and also comes hard—I'm keeping that two sentence rule, so if one really wants the experiences to generalize, one has to make a number of bridging moves that help them to generalize to other domains.

### **Bennett Reimer On How Difficult It Is To Develop Creativity**

**(audio)** All the research now going on, and I'm involved in all sorts of ways with that kind of research looking for the correlations, and that's what they tend to be. So far we have had no causation. We have had a few hints now and then at some of the Danish studies recently of some correlations and they



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were very small things. So, while I want to do some heavy research with a whole group of people on creativity and whether it transfers, we say the notion is that if you're creative in one thing, it's going to transfer to the other. We know how hard transfer is. It really is hard to produce.