

Running head: Vignette #1

Analysis of vignette #1

Chantal Drolet

For: ETEC 532 (summer 2009), Alexander De Cosson

University of British Columbia

2009

Analysis of vignette #1

The artistic realm is accessible through the senses, the mental filters and the emotional links of the one experiencing it. Hence, creative pieces take on various meanings for different people. In other words, the representational power of art is intertwined with the interpretation of the signs that it uses to communicate cognitive processes and perspectives.

Artists such as Stacey Friedman, Sylvia Kind and Roger Dane explore social values as well as historical and political issues by transcending our experience of daily and ordinary routines. They seek to touch the impalpable reasoning hidden behind perceptions through the manipulation of forms and colors, for instance. These creators and performers endeavor to grasp the evasive cultural settings interceding between the object and the immediate awareness of its existence.

As an art educator, Stacy Friedman explores both the ways in which art represents and defines culture. From her standpoint, the creation process can facilitate the expansion of what we perceive to be our own identities, as well as our relationship to others.

Similarly, Sylvia Kind views art as an invitation to engage. For her, the artistic objects have no intrinsic significance. Observers must bring their own experiences around the art to create meaning.

Roger Dane, an art student, also believes that artistic pieces must be interpreted. However, he stresses that the initial artist's viewpoint is not implicit. With each viewer a new voice is created, attesting that cultural attributes and contextual conditions have an effect on the understanding of the art.

The dilemmas that these artists encounter reside in the fact that the concepts of culture and identity are complex. Past experiences and ethnic backgrounds, for example, complicate matters by filtering and influencing attitudes and behaviors.

Navigating between the visible and the invisible

Art is a connection which mediates between identity, representation and culture. The artistic link shows a visual representation that renders knowledge and relationships visible. The art educator's responsibility is to enable the student to perceive the cultural undertones when coming into contact with art. The role of the student is to address the issues of identity and ask: "how do I see myself?", "how do others see me?", "how do others see themselves?"

Through an encounter with art, the student should be empowered to verbalize abstractions and articulate cultural biases. The pedagogical environment, which includes artistic creations as well as the act of creating, should make intangible concepts manageable by offering students something to feel, touch, or discuss.

Reflecting our times

A project using puppets personifying ancestors and their responses to racism offers students an opportunity to use their imagination and experience thinking in a distinctive way. The production of his puppet enabled Roger Dane to put himself in another person's shoes, disregarding his own prejudices. Learning from this experience can help people better understand history and past cultural dispositions without judgment and with increased discernment.

Likewise, with innovative technological tools, instructors and pupils use novel means of delving into philosophical questions critically. The complexity of viewpoints can be tackled by accessing reliable sources on the internet, for example. Where do ideas come from? How are they internalized? How do they affect the way we speak and how we act towards one another? In order to get people past superficial analysis of socio-economic topics, teachers and students can now investigate with sophisticated electronic instruments.

Students as producers of knowledge

Apart from the challenges associated with staying abreast of constant changes, for the teacher, one of the biggest obstacles to the ongoing technological development resides in seeing students with new eyes. The Net Generation (Tapscott, 2004), has grown up with technology and takes an active part in information gathering. While teachers' enculturation may have taken the form of receptivity, young people negotiate meaning through socialization (Stuhr, 1994).

According to Tapscott (1998), the value of "free expression" is another essential characteristic of the current generation. Young artists are at liberty to use an ever increasing number of interactive technological tools. Through these electronic learning contexts, they may choose to reconstruct artifacts to represent socially constructed concepts or to create documentaries to exemplify their analysis. One thing is certain, educators will have to contend with the implications of these emerging reference systems (Fiske, 1990).

References:

1. Tapscott, D. (1998). Growing up digital: The rise of the Net generation. New York: McGraw-Hill.
2. Tapscott, D. (2004). The Net Generation and the School. Milken Family Foundation (http://www.mff.org/edtech/article.taf?_function=detail&Content_uid1=109).
3. Fiske, J. (1990). Communication, Meaning and Signs. Introduction to Communication Studies. London: Routledge.
4. Stuhr, P. (1994). Multicultural art education and social reconstruction. Studies in Art Education, 35(3), 171-178.

Documentary:

Friedman, S. (2004). Art education culture: A puppet based exploration of identity, racism, and responsibility: pre-service teachers in ARTE 320-104, for ETEC 532 (summer 2009).