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ABSTRACT

The guide gives concepts and suggestions for teaching art to gifted students in grades 7 through 9. Noted is the need for adolescent gifted students to view reality with heightened aesthetic perception, to attain success in art work, and to remain uninhibited in development. Topics covered in an overview of art study are criticism of student art, art as a synthesizer, awareness as a source of art, identification of roles, and development of expression through techniques such as keeping hands under a cloth while sculpturing. The function of art is examined in relation to the artist and the viewer, a system of symbols, forces of design, transformation of an encounter to a visual statement, and art as a process of abstraction, symbolism, unification, and awareness of self and society. Approaches to the study of art are given to include elements such as line, artistic skills such as use of tools, presentation of art content such as varieties of textural experiences, and affective involvement such as study of Grecian art and philosophical concepts. Considered in a discussion of creativity and the study of art are cognitive synthesis, the process of transformation, abstraction and fluency, attributes of the gifted child, teaching methods that foster creativity, evaluation of art projects (a checklist is included), and development of human potential. (MC)

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# Teaching Gifted Students Art in Grades Seven Through Nine

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# Teaching Gifted Students Art in Grades Seven Through Nine

Prepared for the  
**DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
California State Department of Education

by  
**D. SYDNEY BROWN**

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## FOREWORD

Today, we Americans are putting more emphasis on making our environment more attractive. One way to carry out that objective is to integrate art into the total environment. Art does not belong on the edges of our society; it belongs in the very center of it.

Through art education in our schools, students are helped to heighten their perception of the world about them. They are encouraged to express themselves through art media. They are given the opportunity to study artists and works of art of the past and present. They are helped to develop aesthetic judgment. "Students' concern for their visual environment," according to the *Art Education Framework for California Public Schools*, "is enhanced as they learn to recognize, talk about, and work with the underlying structure of art." Our job in education is to open wide the doors of exploration so that art becomes a part of the lives of our children. How dull—how drab—those lives would be if the children looked, but did not see—touched, but did not feel.

Teaching art to the gifted is a special responsibility for teachers, for many of these young persons will one day be deciding whether art will be given its proper role in our society. To assist these teachers of the gifted, the Department has directed and coordinated a project to develop needed curriculum materials. This publication, one in a series, contains important concepts and suggestions for the use of teachers of the mentally gifted in grades seven through nine. I hope that these teachers will find this publication useful in the important work entrusted to them. And I further hope that, through the efforts of our schools, California and the nation will continue to see the return of art to the center of our society.



*Superintendent of Public Instruction*

## PREFACE

This publication is one of the products of an educational project authorized and funded under provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title V. It is intended for use by the teachers of pupils whose mental ability is such that they are classified as mentally gifted. It is also recommended for use by administrators, consultants, and other professional personnel involved in helping gifted children.

*Teaching Gifted Students Art in Grades Seven Through Nine* is one of a group of curriculum materials designed for use by teachers of the mentally gifted in grades one through three, four through six, seven through nine, and ten through twelve. These materials were prepared under the direction of Mary N. Meeker, Associate Professor of Education, and James Magary, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, both of the University of Southern California.

Also developed as part of the education project is a series of curriculum guides for use in the teaching of mentally gifted minors in elementary and secondary schools. The guides contain practical suggestions that teachers can use to advantage in particular subject areas. These guides were prepared under the direction of John C. Gowan, Professor of Education, and Joyce Sonntag, Assistant Professor of Education, both of California State University, Northridge.

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## Chapter 1

# Overview of the Study of Art

During his years in junior high school, a youngster passes from childhood to young adulthood. The changes in aesthetic attitude that the child experiences during this period are very important. He becomes increasingly aware of and affected by the reactions and criticisms of his peers. At the same time he is entering into the most idealistic period of his life. During this period of transition, the student is most concerned with an increasing awareness of reality as understood by others. His attitudes are changing from a substantially imaginative, uncritical state to one of critical awareness. A need exists at this time for the student to experience success in his art work and yet to remain uninhibited in his development.

### Art as Expression

Because the student is now more critical in judgment and, as a consequence, relies to a greater extent on his own interpretation of facts, it is important that art experiences be structured around expression rather than representation. The student's level of development can be capitalized on if he is given problems by means of which he can (1) judge his own efforts without having his work compared to a real object; or (2) undertake a project with freedom to explore his own interests. The discovery method can be used to lead the student into comprehending aspects of reality through his own increasing powers of observation.

The ability of gifted students to acquire large amounts of knowledge from diverse areas can be put to good use in art education. Any problems that stretch the mind (e.g., historical montages, reverse perspectives) can induce the student to draw from his own rich vocabulary.

That a child is identified as intellectually gifted does not mean that he is aesthetically gifted or creatively gifted. The art product of the gifted student can vary as much in any aspect as does the art of other students. The teacher must, therefore, be aware of stages of development in order to direct the child's progress. None of the levels of accomplishment is less important than any other; each simply represents a stage in the processing of symbols. Primarily, the

student needs instruction not in the way to draw but in ways to think about life and to interact with it. The only right way for a student to draw is his own way, and this way is achieved most productively through sensitive guidance from the teacher, through examination of the subject, and through experience.

### Criticism of Student Art

Criticism of the art product at a significant level is an essential part of the art process. By *significant* is meant that the child presents his product to the class for criticism. It is here that the teacher of the gifted can be productive or stultifying, and it is here that art becomes either a meaningful activity or just another practice in skill development based on conformity.

Divergence from the norm can be threatening to students, particularly in grades seven through nine where acceptance by one's peer group is sometimes considered almost the equivalent of existence. Great effort is required of the teacher to remain open to the creative product, and almost superhuman effort is required of the teacher to provide a class situation based on acceptance. Discussions on creative effort, pressures of conformity, and a person's feelings while he is working creatively contribute to an understanding of the demands that students universally must cope with. In addition, the teacher can, by example and by an open attitude toward process and product, encourage students to achieve.

### Art as Synthesizer

Together with the teachers of other disciplines in the school, the art teacher must devote himself to the emotional development of his students. Emotional response, kinesthetic enjoyment, and sensory awareness must be encouraged. No person can contribute to society except as a technician unless he possesses some degree of integration of emotions and intelligence. Today one cannot have complete cognitive awareness of all areas of knowledge and technology. Art can, however, serve as a unifying element because art depends on intuition as its source of power. Art becomes the synthesizer of factual knowledge.

### Awareness as a Source of Art

The ultimate source of art is *awareness*, a term difficult to define. The multiplicity of its aspects contributes to the difficulty with definition. Essentially, awareness is the quality of being intensely alive; that is, being open to the environment and reacting to it. Awareness occurs when the body reacts; that is, when internal memories are stimulated and interactions are caused.

The art class must become a training ground for awareness. The very young do not need an art class to learn how to be aware. They taste the world, manipulate it, push it, prod it, and enjoy it. Unfortunately, the pressures of school and of society in time produce a situation where many look but do not see, eat but do not taste, and touch but do not feel. As a fundamental principle of art, awareness is a subject for discourse in class. Sensory experiences ought to be provided for in the art class. To provide some of these experiences, the teacher can ask students to do the following:

1. Close your eyes and concentrate on touch alone (e.g., by clasping hands or touching faces).
2. Concentrate on sound alone (e.g., by listening to water splashing or to noises in the room).
3. Concentrate on the interactions of sight, smell, sound, taste, and touch (e.g., by eating a hamburger or arranging flowers).

It is insufficient to provide only the conditions for sensory experience. The teacher should encourage students to express themselves in words, actions, paintings, and clay. The teacher should ask: "How did you feel when you were coasting down the hill? At the top of the tree? On the cool grass? What were your feelings when you were lost in the woods? In the shopping center? What is the smell of a rose like? What are the most enjoyable smells to you? Which are the smells easiest to recall?"

An experience can be made more vivid by reflection. In addition, the verbal expression of inner emotions unites the intellectual with the affective. With practice there comes forth a new awareness of living in the here and now. For example, the teacher should spend some time with his class in discussing experiences. When an experience becomes an integral part of a person, creative expression is facilitated. The world is in easy access; only practice is needed in developing awareness to enjoy it more fully.

### Identification of Roles

In addition to the matter of awareness, consideration must be given to a second principle involved in the process of art; that is, the developing sexuality of students. At the present time, identification of masculine and feminine roles needs review. Although less common than in the past, a tendency still exists in the minds of many persons to consider involvement in art by males as effeminate. Fortunately, the archaic concept of the typical male as neither sensuous nor feeling and as anti-intellectual is fading. But to a developing boy seeking to identify his masculinity, some aspects of art can be threatening if not dealt with.

Creativity depends on a person's sensitivity to life in all of its aspects. What must be emphasized to students is that these aspects are neither masculine nor feminine but related to self. Discussions in which the aggressive role of the artist in social situations is pointed out can lead to new understanding (e.g., in the works of Goya, Daumier, and Picasso). Work with mallet and chisel on large blocks of wood can illustrate the use of power and strength as a means of expression. The development of satisfaction with self can be achieved with normal consideration for evolving differences, pleasant interpersonal contacts, and the use wherever possible of movement of the body in design and interpretation.

### Development of Expression

In the art curriculum for gifted students in grades seven through nine, additional precision is required in defining the term *expression*. Awareness, sensitivity, and perception are all oriented inwardly and are essential to the art process; but these internalizations must be brought forth as expression. A facility for expression can only follow a need for expression or a concern for articulation. The painting of a petunia as an art exercise offers little stimulation for students at this age. In the assignment must be contained enough involvement so that the idea can be brought to completion. The assignment must engage the sensitivities of the student and direct his formulations.

Art does not emerge as a finished product. It is generated by internal power, but its potential form works through a period of incubation. Expansion, deliberation, and revision are all part of the act of expression. Solutions to the problem of gaining precision in expression can be facilitated by the use of exercises that direct the student to defined areas. Thus, a project centering on the emotion of anger eliminates feelings of joy, and a project centering on speed eliminates ideas relating to motionlessness. When the assignment assists the student, his capacity to work towards a particular idea is enhanced. His success in developing a vague feeling into an object or painting can contribute to a significant improvement in his ability to express himself.

Open-ended assignments can occasionally contribute to one's ability to express himself, but the study of expression in specific directions and to specific ends gathers together the sharpened interactions into the art process. To help students develop expression, the teacher can ask them to do the following:

1. Use the inner eye. Relax with your eyes closed, watching for shapes, colors, and impressions that are not of the real world.

2. Do clay sculptures relating to the emotions. Keep your hands and work concealed by a cloth.
3. Use one color of paint to work out ideas about motion, death, hunger, and so forth.
4. Watch images flashed on a screen by a slide projector.

## Chapter 2

# The Function of Art

Art is enigmatic. Although it permeates our culture and influences our products, its essential meaning remains unclear. The long threads of man's history reach out to us from antiquity and entwine our art forms; yet the entanglements cannot be understood in a predominantly cognitive manner. Today, education is often thought of as something done by the teacher to the student; that is, the funneling of information into the student. The enigma of art exists in the continual creation of its substance, for art is an attempt to penetrate to a reality beyond experience where answers are at first unknown and where, as answers are discovered, they no longer satisfy. The products of art become part of experience and thus contribute to a new definition of art.

### Artist and Viewer

Like science, art delineates tomorrow's world; and just as the statements of science frequently confound the world, so too do those of art. Yet if the teacher is to convey to the gifted student some comprehension of the manifestations of art, he must help the student to understand the influence of history and the outline of the future. It is particularly important that the art curriculum for gifted students attend to these matters. The artist attempts to compress his experience of reality into an abstraction of clay or paint or some other substance. He expresses the things he sees and feels and dreams. And although the environment is the crucible in which he mixes his uniqueness and from which he derives his vision, art is the intensified distillation of that experience.

The aesthetic vision of man is not static. It has been altered as the concepts of man himself have been altered. The all-inclusive magic of the created image that influenced primitive man exists today just beneath man's consciousness. Having grown more sophisticated, modern man sees a painting as a representation. Yet the spurned lover, for example, tears into pieces the picture of the beloved so as to "destroy" her. Modern man also maintains a bond with primitive man in his concern with the intent rather than with the experience of the artist. The viewer of a painting or a piece of sculpture is enabled by the magic of art to commune with the artist across time.

### Art as a System of Symbols

The teacher of art must be aware that to involve the student in art means to select and deal with the things and ideas most important and most current to the student. To the ancients a symbol was a device to influence and ameliorate the environment; for example, to strike an image of an animal was to strike the animal and thereby entice the spirits into accepting the killing. Each culture has, in time, altered the received view of that which is eternal or most real to coincide with its own view. So too must this age of rockets and instantaneous communication imprint itself on the spirit of the student artist. Art is a system of symbols by means of which one person can share ideas, values, feelings, and himself with others. It is a constantly varying system, and the variety is increased or decreased by the individual.

### Forces of Design

Unlike words, painting presents itself as a unity, the parts of which are seen in interaction. Western culture is predominantly sequential in viewpoint and perception. This sequential orientation has resulted in a concentration on the analytical. The impact of this situation for art has been to impart a storytelling approach. The usual gallery viewer first looks at the title of a painting, for example, and then at the painting itself to verify whether the story indicated by the title has been fulfilled. However, art is a dynamic relationship of parts and should be viewed as a thing in itself. The patterns of structure that are seen as art are the patterns of interactions of forces of design. Forces of design can be described in a variety of divisions or oppositions but are here reduced to dynamic and static forces. Dynamic force contains the elements of power, motion, and flux; the static force, on the other hand, is concerned with calm, immobility, and unchangeableness.

A blank canvas is an example of static force; that is, no variety of shape, texture, or color exists. Chaos represents the other end of the continuum. Static interactions such as the architectonic consist of horizontals and verticals. The organic is involved with movement, flexibility, and curves. Static interactions can be curved also, like the repeating curves of a calm ocean. It is the degree of interaction of the elements of design that produces the perceived structure and touches the viewer's individual experiences.

### Art as Transformation

Art is a transformation. Neither conformity nor copying should be encouraged in an art curriculum for the gifted. Art consists of finding

an encounter in one's subjective experience and altering it into a visual statement. In copying, this process does not occur. Just as a camera, without sensation, records the accidental light that enters when the shutter is opened, so does the person who copies. Art and copying are different.

An art product must portray the sensitivity, personal taste, and perception of the artist. It is through the self and the world that intensification beyond reproduction can be obtained. This intensification then becomes art – an experience consciously transformed. Mere imitation destroys the individual viewpoint, and mere transplanting or copying is a denial of involvement in the process. The goal at this level of the child's education is to make art an instrument by which to clarify the living process and intensify the student's relation to it.

It is not suggested here that the student who approaches art realistically should be coerced to change but that his attention be directed to his own originality, exploration, and involvement. His confidence will increase when his realism permeates his own perceptions. Reproduction, copying, and transplanting are analogous to the lower intellectual levels of cognition and memory and are, therefore, only introductory steps to concern with the art process.

### Art as Process

The major concern in teaching art is the process of unifying society, oneself, and the environment. Concepts on process that offer a guide for the teacher of the gifted are presented as follows:

1. Art is a process of abstraction and symbolism.
2. Art is a process of becoming aware of society.
3. Art is a process of becoming aware of self.
4. Art is a process of unification.

### Abstraction and Symbolism

Attempts to capture an idea or object on paper or in clay define the act of abstraction. If the student is to become continually aware that this condensation of reality is a process of decision and selection, he will need guidance in making the selections available to him and in making the decisions that will lead to the art process. The gifted need opportunities to fail safely and to make intelligent wrong guesses. Confidence in making decisions and selections can be developed in students only in an atmosphere of freedom under the guidance of a sensitive art teacher.

*Quality of selection.* Abstractions such as "the fleetness of a deer" or "the solemnity of the owl" are used in alluding to selective and

appropriate qualities in persons. Similarly, the artist selects and distinguishes the qualities of an object. The difficulty of reducing experience to concrete objects illustrates the limitations of art as well as its power. If the quality of selection is high, the art product produces a strong reaction in the individual who views it.

*Personal selection.* The need to emphasize continuous choice in the abstraction process and the need to use only those elements that have significance to the individual are fundamentals of art education that cannot be stressed too much. Personal selection can be facilitated by the use of such questions as the following:

1. What is important to you in this object?
2. What do you see in this object?
3. Can you listen to a person speak and note his style of abstraction?
4. What things are you drawn to?
5. What things are unimportant?
6. How do you feel about this object?
7. In what ways can your reactions be shown?

The teacher should have the students explore other ways in which condensation takes place in symbols. The connection of a symbol to an idea can be explored. At this age students are eager to apply their understanding of a symbol as a mark or configuration that has come to have associations. This device opens a world of relationships to them. Games of word associations can lead to visual relationships. One can use a word as a focus and quickly associate a list from the key word (e.g., gold — coins, wealth, mines, palomino, West, sun, grain, black gold). From this list the students can draw, paint, or sculpt a form combining some (or all) of their associations. When a symbol is a concept universally agreed upon, it becomes a communication device. Yet it was initiated by some person, and this initiation is the creative, original thought looked for in abstraction. When viewed as a system of symbols, art becomes a more advanced form of communication than either spoken or written language.

### Art and Society

Art can be considered as a record of man's view of the world. Each age has carved, painted, or otherwise ordered reality as viewed at that time. What we see in art today is what we are. Because each civilization has its limits in knowledge, perceptions, ideas, and feelings, it may well be that the individual who is aware of what is outside these limits has the capacity to change that civilization.

*Historical view.* The individual who rejects the modes of the past or who is capable of new visions has changed the art world since the beginnings of history. About A.D. 1300 the Florentine artist Giotto

rediscovered the Roman method of producing the illusion of depth in a painting and added to the method his own awareness of space. Shortly thereafter the Florentine painter Masaccio, using the newly formulated mathematics of perspective, created and introduced to an unreceptive audience the perspective frame. Leonardo da Vinci brought life to perspective in his forms by using techniques of adding light and diffusing the atmosphere. Using the new knowledge of his time, each of these artists transformed that knowledge into a new symbol.

*Student involvement.* The gifted child's sensitivity is the key to entering the door leading into himself. This key is neither the intellectual analysis of subject matter nor the memorization of artists and dates; it is the seeing and responding to those elements found in himself. Ways to increase sensitivity in students include asking students to (1) stand like Greek statues and feel some small quality of the balance and symmetry exemplified in Greek art; (2) posture their bodies like ancient Egyptian figures, focusing their eyes where the eyes of the figure are and looking into the life beyond; and (3) trace the lines in a painting by Jackson Pollack to feel the intensity and the dynamics of life today.

This participation in art is an emotional relationship. These experiences show how structure contributes to feeling and offers a means of vicarious exploration of the world beyond the immediate. If the student is instructed to look upon art objects as things to be approved of or as things to be categorized, he is being instructed by the analytic method and not by the synthetic method. Reading, although sequential, produces an involvement with ideas. Similarly, art study should stress involvement first and cognitive excursions later.

The student can be encouraged to enter into full involvement by directing him to ask: "What would I feel like if I were that way? What would I be looking at? Is this placement of elements altering my feelings? How do I react?" These questions introduce the affective element in an art form. Thus the experience of the ghetto depicted by Ben Shahn and the inner torture and scream of loneliness found in the work of Edvard Munch become the beholder's experience. The artists of any age who change the symbols used by men to communicate with one another give form to that age.

#### **Awareness of Self**

A clarification of how symbols are structured will help the student to develop a personal vocabulary. A study of the structure of symbols deals with that of which dreams are made. Unlike

intellectual operations, which proceed in order and are based on logic, art involves the intuitive function, which discursively produces relationships in the unconscious.

The act of placing a line or a splash of color is a commitment. In the moment of choice, the self is supported or denied. Perceptual reactions and relations must not be inhibited. A need exists for a child to relate in a symbolic way to raw experience. Language has initiated the process of verbal symbolics, and art must encourage and facilitate the nonverbal. Even with the most rudimentary tools, a child can affect his environment. A valid ego-symbol relationship is the product of this manipulation. It is true that to communicate, one must possess a formulation that has enough commonality to be received; but if the communication is to humanize, it must contain one's own individuality.

Congruence between oneself and the external world is obstructed by much of what is being done in art education. If art instruction consists of an assignment calling for convergent right answers, a split is caused between the self and the one applying external pressures. If too much consideration is devoted to the expedient, the practical, and the repetitive to have standards for grading, then art activities at all levels tend to encourage expected production rather than divergence.

The student is naturally dependent on his environment for satisfaction, acceptance, and security. Anxious dependency is fostered in him when he is asked to alter his work to conform to the teacher's standards. By the time the student reaches grade seven he has already experienced this situation. He has learned that what he has produced is not necessarily acceptable and that he must choose between his product and security. This situation is especially difficult for the gifted, who are generally more sensitive than the nongifted. If the student is to acquire his own symbols, he must be given opportunities to make choices supported by adult acceptance.

### Unifying Agent

It is not enough that symbols and self-expression unite; art requires that they be interwoven into a unity. The integration of visual factors relates one to another, and to alter or move any factor is to create disunity. It is necessary to avoid analysis. If questions are asked for identification (e.g., "What is it?" or "What is the story?"), the unitary impression of the emotion tends to be obstructed. When parts of an art object are studied out of context, tenuous and subtle relationships are destroyed because the whole is greater than the parts.

The teacher can contribute to establishing a sense of artistic unity by doing as follows:

1. Calling attention to relationships
2. Encouraging the selection of parts that contribute most to what was attempted
3. Encouraging the viewing of the art object in a mirror or upside down when harmony is being looked for
4. Having students look for the relationship of the top right to the lower left of the art object

In summary, art offers a qualitative approach to life and leads to a fuller understanding of man and his relationships. A concern with aesthetics should enter into personal decisions continually.

## Chapter 3

# Approaches to the Study of Art

What is the purpose of the art class for the gifted? In grades seven through nine, the purpose is not to produce artists. Rather, the purpose is to foster a richer appreciation of life and to involve students in all of the manifestations of life.

### Elements of Art

The elements of art – line, tone, shape, color, texture – are vehicles for the development of the major concerns of seeing, feeling, expressing, and interpreting. None of the elements can function as a totally separate entity (e.g., a line has color and shape), but projects directed primarily to each element can lead to skill development.

#### Line

As used in drawing or painting, line refers to the real or imaginary edges or outlines of objects, forms, or spaces. A good way for the teacher to introduce this element is to illustrate its variety. For example, the teacher can use a line in telling a story (e.g., about a trip to the zoo), altering the line as emotions change. Or the teacher can have the students draw one of their hands in an expressive mode, asking the students to look only at the hand being drawn and not at the paper. Music can be used as a source for the rhythm of lines, and change can be made from simple to complex harmonics. A search can be made for a line that can be projected (e.g., roots of plants or spider webs). Or the same idea can be drawn with a different quality of line. Wire can be used to experiment with form construction. And Oriental calligraphy can be studied to learn how to express words by the use of line variety.

#### Tone

Tone, which is the variation of light and dark, is usually an attribute of shape, color, or texture. Lessons can be developed to show its function. The teacher can ask students to construct dimensional movement by the use of tone exclusively. Light

projections can be used on curved and contoured surfaces. Washes can be experimented with to show movement with tone variation. Or tone drawings can be made without an outline. Abrupt tone changes can be tried to make patterns, and spray paints can be used to construct space impressions.

### Shapes

Shape is the visible makeup characteristic of a particular item or kind of item. Much of the world can be viewed as gestalt or shape. In an attempt to discover the influence of shape on the emotions, the teacher should suggest to students that they experiment with cartoon techniques where the shape changes from a timid form to an aggressive one. Shape can also be used to alter portraits (as seen in the work of Modigliani) or to develop a realistic picture with variations of squares or triangles. Opague shapes can be projected to balance positive and negative space.

### Color

Color is a general term for any quality of light distinguishable by sight. The teacher can begin a lesson on color with an historical reference to the impressionists, relating to the class how these painters were received by the critics and by the public. He can show the creative use of light and color in films and television production. Students can use dabs of color in enlarging color reproductions, in working with acetate, and in constructing three-dimensional colored sculptures. They can experiment with op art and with color opposites, and they can alter moods by changing colors. They can also construct pictures illustrating the time of day, the seasons of the year, and the students' differing moods. They can build stage sets with forms that can be altered by changes of light.

### Texture

Texture is the quality of materials as they would feel if touched. The teacher can suggest here that students (a) make collages of textures to illustrate "a party," "the fair," "swimming," or "sadness"; (b) make rubbings and combine them into forms; (c) use clay and impressions of leaves and tools to develop different textures; (d) combine pieces of "found art" to a surface pattern; (e) make a sculpture with forms and texture to show personality; and (f) make a collection of personal textures relating to sleep, hunger, and work.

### Important Artistic Skills

Artistic skills that the art student will find vital to his work include creativity, technical skills, and intellectual skills.

## Creativity

Creativity as a skill is dependent on a rich background from which to draw components. It is affected by the manner of one's being introduced to materials; the manner in which materials are shaped; the manner in which materials intermingle with one another; and the manner in which materials are bonded together. However, the ultimate determinant of how creativity is used is the manner in which one directly senses the environment.

## Technical Skills

The use of tools with dexterity and the ability to make the hands obey the mind are necessary skills in creating an art object. It is possible, however, to be involved in developing capability while subverting the originality of the self. To spend a great amount of time on study of method when the student does not need such extensive study may be expedient for the teacher but can as well be destructive for the student.

## Intellectual Skills

A gifted student has the ability to abstract, to synthesize, and to evaluate. He is also capable of cognitive explorations beyond the history of art forms. He is capable of contemplating the philosophy of art. Topics that he may find useful include what things man has found to be beautiful; what ideas man has shown in his art; what man has left out of his art; and what the limits of art are. The teacher should attempt to guide the gifted student into an exploration of the ideas behind art and to endeavor to keep the student interested in art.

Maslow points to the need for skill in (1) seeing the extraordinary, or the uncommon in the common; and (2) touching the intuitive.<sup>1</sup> Each project in the art class, although concerned with ultimate facility in work with clay, stone, or other materials, is most productively directed to investigations of oneself and of one's emerging view of life.

## Presentation of Art Content

Students in junior high school may meet the subject of art for the first time as a distinct discipline. At higher levels of education, art is generally taught by a specialist as a separate subject. The gifted student is thereby provided with an opportunity to use his potential to the maximum. But in many junior high schools, art is not taught

<sup>1</sup> Abraham Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being*. Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1962.

by specialists. It is necessary, therefore, that the program be structured to meet individual needs. The teaching of content as an individually prescribed program in an art class must proceed in conjunction with an exploration of ways in which the environment will allow the unfolding of creativity.

Reliance on traditional graphic modes of depicting subjects can be modified by unusual presentations of subject matter such as the following:

1. Break the stereotyped way of seeing reality. Use X-ray photographs, radiographs, and optical illusions. Have students look at things through chunks of glass. Intrigue students with photographs taken from an airplane.
2. Begin with the pure enjoyment of kinesthetic motion as in scribbling or printing by hand. Have each student select an object of personal importance and depict how he thinks he would have drawn it at various times in his life. (This encouragement of regression is cognitive at first but begins to draw on the hidden storehouse of sensory experience. Objects can be depicted from different emotional states where reward goes to the process rather than to the product.) Encourage discussions of sensory experiences, of things real and imagined. Play recordings of city noises and night noises, and, if thunder is heard, amplify the sound so that students can get it into their work.
3. Break sequential orientation and increase the capacity for relationships by showing two motion pictures together on the same screen (e.g., *The Moods of Surfing* and *Changing Art in Changing World*).<sup>2</sup> Reward fluency of perceived relationships and incongruous accidents. Have students paint or draw some of the accidental occurrences and encourage the cognitive excursions they might induce.
4. Provide a variety of experiences that stress the textural qualities of life through the making of collages of materials that are bright, rough, jagged, slick, dirty, machine-made, and natural. Use the bioscope (projection microscope) to project the unusual. Use a box with hidden objects in which the student must "feel" his drawing. Have students draw entire pictures with the eyes closed. Dig deep for textural reactions. (Materials for the art class can be traditional or unusual. By making a large amount of materials available, the teacher can ensure that the

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<sup>2</sup>*The Moods of Surfing*, Pyramid Film Productions, n.d.; *Changing Art in a Changing World*, Paul Burnford, 1967.

materials will be used in different ways and that the probability of an original approach will be increased. The shaping, cutting, and joining of materials without the use of tools can increase the understanding of material quality and provide a broad base for future applications.)

5. Make obvious to the student his increasing sensitivity and variability by giving him long rolls of paper for drawing and painting and having him keep a secret written record of his feelings each day as he begins class. Let him use these notes as the basis of an abstraction. Have available in class a collection of swatches of color from which he can choose to indicate his preferences for the day. Allow him to paste onto the swatches isolated words cut from magazines to accent the emotion and to unify the experience by tying the semantic to the affect.
6. Encourage projects designed to show the limited validity of equating realism and perspective by forcing a greater interchange between the thing depicted and the artist. (Drawings done by "circling" an object can lead to an understanding of this limitation.)

In art education too much consideration is devoted to the expedient and the practical rather than to the art process. Because art is a process, the teacher must train the student to attend to what is occurring during the moment. Any product is a thing of the past. This truth is especially evident in art, for one can see where he has been but not where he is going. Unfortunately, a great desire exists on the part of most teachers to increase the child's competence by making suggestions for improvement. The teacher who has a tendency to act in this way will reconsider if he understands that this act, which sets him up as a judge, will then deny the student's right to his own viewpoint. For example, adults see a doorknob below them on a door and show its "realistic" position in a drawing. But a child, particularly a small child, sees the doorknob from below and draws it high on the door. Both drawings are correct for each individual. For the adult to characterize his version as "more accurate" is to diminish the child's conceptualization.

### Affective Involvement in Art

The history of art is best understood if it is approached through the intention of the artist. Painters depict what to them is most real. Their art is made as a preverbal statement. To uncover the artist's intention, the student must enter into the feelings of the art object and understand it as an emotional experience. The gifted youngster who has demonstrated primarily verbal giftedness can best become

aware of the affective content of an era if he understands the limitations of knowledge during that time and of the constraining influences of this knowledge. An approach that seeks affective involvement is outlined as follows:

1. *Art of early man.* This period was a time of magic. The picture is the thing. The teacher can have students conceive of fear and monstrous shapes out of the darkness; create, in the mood of magic, "deities"; and develop ideas of present "fears" and portray these as power influences.<sup>3</sup>
2. *Art of primitive man.* Here masks and costumes can be used to illustrate the power of nature. Animal counterparts can be selected to represent what the student would like to be. What qualities are suggested? Costumes can be designed to evoke the spirits. Magic symbols can be created.
3. *Art of Egypt.* The teacher can ask the class to consider eternity, a life beyond where entry is guarded by priests. Students can create pictographs to show this power and design symbols that represent themselves (cartouches). What needs are met with these objects? Items can be collected for the life beyond, and wall plaques can be carved in commemoration.
4. *Art of Greece.* A study of this period deals with the construction of myths and the portrayal of the universe. Drawings and sculpture can be made using bodies in balance. Because the gods have human forms, what effect does this limitation have on each? The dawn of enlightenment in thought and ideas can be compared with the changing forms of early and late Greece.
5. *Art of the East.* All things can be thought of as being related. Students can draw a rock that has life. If nature is as important as man, how should this be shown in pictures? If images may not be used (as with Islam), what can be used to decorate the churches? How can the importance of nature influence the design of gardens and homes? The students can design a home where nature is as important as the occupant.
6. *Art of Christianity.* If the emphasis in this period was on spirit, how have artists shown this fact? How can one indicate "no time" and "no space"? How did these artists accomplish this effect? What choice of colors would best show this purpose? How can God be portrayed as supreme?
7. *Art of the New World.* Emphasis during this period was on realism, on the analytical showing of surfaces, and on scientific

<sup>3</sup>See "Selected References" at the back of this publication for entries under "Films" and "Filmstrips." Entries can be found that are applicable to the items contained in this outline.

understanding. Did the art of this period reflect the changes? Did the discovery of the weight of air affect painting? Artists called impressionists felt that vision only gives impressions of life and that one cannot show reality. They used quick sketches of motion and pure dabs of color in such a way that the color blends in the eye of the observer. Were the impressionists successful? To show that things are more than just a surface, the abstractionists and the constructionists tried different means. How can energy, tensions, motion, and strength of materials be shown?

The student who is developing a sense of identity will find that the universality of historical involvement will help clarify the common bonds of the emotions of men in all periods. To enter into art through the form and substance of a period is to be involved with the affective elements of history. Questions that the teacher can ask students in an attempt to provide insight into the common thread of emotion include the following:

1. How have cultures approached identification in literature and art?
2. What is a person considered to be in each period of art?
3. What has each period of art used as its subject matter?
4. What is the subject doing?
5. What is the viewing frame?

#### Other Approaches to Art Study

Other approaches to art study include having students (1) select from a large collection one or two paintings or sculptures to which they respond with feeling; and (2) record each artist and his work. Over a period of time it should be noted whether a consistency of theme or type is present. The teacher knows that there is no right answer and that the purpose of the exercise is to become aware of one's inner feelings and convictions.

Students are interested in slang. They easily grasp the analogy between slang usage and style alterations in painting. Do these style alterations comparable to slang represent the beginnings of a new literary art form? Are they part of the symbol process? Do they make precise statements? Do development schemata (e.g., the use of a circle with arms to represent *man*) constitute the equivalent of slang? The teacher should have the students change one symbol to another with transition lines, asking that the students begin with an outline of a skull and then alter the outline to that of a heart.

Or the students can change the outline of a doughnut to that of a coffee cup in the same manner (or can make sequential drawings

along a sheet of paper for the same transition). The teacher should point out how this technique is related to cartoon construction. (An exhibition at Disneyland illustrates the use of film and drawings to portray the history of cartoon art. Some gifted students may want to make similar displays.) Overhead projectors can be used for psychedelic "now" art. A mixture of salad oil and colored water sealed in a plastic bag is a good beginning for this art form. Can this form be used to make a precise statement?

In considering the personal aesthetics of each student, the teacher should ask for suggestions for using art to make life more pleasant in school. For example, the teacher can ask what are the personal requirements for a secret "thinking place" and whether such a place can be constructed in the school environment. Curiosity in art can produce many unusual results. The creatively gifted child will have many ideas he wants to explore. The teacher will have to make the schedule liberal enough for the student to explore on his own.

## Chapter 4

# Creativity and the Study of Art

Utilization of the higher levels of the cognitive domain in the art curriculum is associated here primarily with efforts towards synthesis, transformation, abstraction, and fluency. The substance of art itself is synthesis. The presentation of art history or any other cognitive aspect of art should not be limited to dates, periods, or styles.

### Cognitive Synthesis

The study of major issues like beauty, cultural views, the function of art, and the nature of art are good means of attaining cognitive synthesis. Investigations or discussions should seek to combine the many areas of study. Unification can be initiated by questioning the nature of beauty. Some of the questions that can be asked are the following:

1. Does suntanned skin appear beautiful because it is desirable, or has it beauty in itself?
2. Is Plato's concept of the ideal form behind substance, which was meaningful to the Greeks in his day, relevant today?
3. How would the concept of the beautiful be affected if humans had four arms?
4. Is there such a thing as abstract beauty, or is beauty a matter of ever-changing taste?
5. How has man's control of the environment altered what he considers beautiful? How has this control influenced his choice of what to include in his works of art?

### Process of Transformation

Controversy and challenge are always present in a discussion of the structure of art. Both can be dealt with on the higher cognitive levels within the framework of the changing concept of reality presented in art forms; that is, by the process termed *transformation*. For example, that conditions present in the forces at work in the world induced nineteenth-century impressionists to abandon the realistic

approach to art is evident from the study of history. The world of science was illustrating at the time that things are not as they seem to the eye; that is, that impressions are affected by light. The influence of photography on Degas is evidenced in the way he cut off figures in his paintings, in the frame of the paintings, and in his depiction of frozen motion. The influence of the Orient, just being opened to Westerners, is seen in the paintings of Van Gogh and Gauguin. The teacher should challenge students to speculate on influences throughout history. He can ask (1) what changes were to be expected after Copernicus, after Darwin, and after Einstein; and (2) how these changes acted as transformations.

### Abstraction and Fluency

The teacher should lead students to discover how in each era life was abstracted in paint and clay. The important thoughts of an age in science, religion, and literature should be investigated. Some of the questions that can be asked are the following:

1. What distinguishes one automobile from another? What is the briefest statement you know to differentiate one model from another?
2. What comparisons can be made between present political cartoons and the work of Daumier?
3. What words convey concepts concerning flight?
4. Does the diagonal line in art relate to activity?
5. What elements appear to carry the concept of majesty?

Fluency in cognitive skills functions as the basis of creative development. It can be encouraged by the use of questions that broaden patterns of thinking and encourage interrelated excursions.

### Attributes of Creativity

If the art teacher is to encourage creativity and individuality in art, he must be familiar with the many attributes of the gifted child. He must then individualize the art curriculum to meet these needs. The reader is referred to the works of Torrance, Guilford, Barron, and Maslow for general interpretations of creativity. Meeker's rating scale for identifying creative potential clarifies the many attributes of creativity and also serves as an assistance to the teacher unfamiliar with them.<sup>1</sup> One focus of this publication is on the nurture of creativity and the essential relationship between creativity in gifted children and productivity.

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<sup>1</sup>See "Selected References" at the back of this publication for entries under "Books." At least one pertinent book by each of the authors mentioned in this paragraph is contained in the listing.

### **Tolerance**

Whenever a student is assisted in improving his ability to be at ease in the face of diversity, his creative ability is increased. Rewards in class can reinforce this approach. When, for example, student work is to be placed on the board for criticism, the teacher should make sure that the alarming, the humorous, the unusual, and the incongruous will be represented along with neat and pleasant items. A multiplicity of solutions to any problem should be allowed. Articulation of the figure, for example, can be explored as well in clay, wire, or paper as in paint.

### **Autonomy**

The value of self-determined judgment and the resistance to conformity can be encouraged by stressing the historical uniqueness of each new idea. The teacher should show how groups have inhibited valid and correct solutions to problems. Some of the most revered artists achieved fame only after the initial turmoil caused by their work was forgotten. Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, the paintings in perspective of Masaccio, and the works of Van Gogh and Picasso are all examples of art first rejected by many and later generally accepted. The teacher should, above all else, encourage acceptance of the unusual by withholding personal judgments and evaluation. He should foster self-criticism in students by providing the means to differentiate the unusual from the fallacious.

### **Curiosity**

A risk occurs when a student feels that the goals to be achieved in his art outweigh the consequences of his work. Reward can be given for failure where the student has made an attempt to produce an extension of the self. The teacher should structure all situations to allow an easy choice between growth and fear of failure. The gifted student has most frequently achieved success within the confines of academic achievement and thus has a tendency to remain in comfortable surroundings. An issue to be explored here is whether man has been successful because he has adapted himself to his environment or because he has adapted the environment to himself. The teacher should encourage self-initiated explorations in the use of art materials and interplays between subject areas. Because the gifted student can sense discrepancies between ideas, he should be encouraged to restate problems.

### **Fluency**

A multiplicity of reactions is necessary in the creative process. The curriculum should be structured to include the goal of quantity

production, and diversity should be rewarded whenever it occurs. A capacity for fluency cannot be measured in short intervals. Fluency can exhibit itself in a variety of forms; i.e., verbal, motor, and ideational. Projects can be assigned in each of these areas.

### **Congruence**

Creativity refers to a willingness to listen to one's inner voice and to exhibit in a product the greatest congruence possible between it and the inner voice. A frequent questioning of one's state of being will induce the needed awareness. An activity as simple as writing a sentence at the end of a class period as a summation of the student's feelings on that period will bring attention to this factor. The use of rolls of paper rather than single sheets and folders for the student's work will lead the student to an awareness of an appreciation for his own variability. Again, the teacher can present art as a preverbal configuration in which concepts are discursive in form before an individual or society is able to explain them.

### **Intuition**

The creative student is dependent on intuition. Although intuition has as diverse a definition as does creativity, it must be considered as most relevant. Studies of intuition as it relates to problem solving in the precognitive and preverbal areas indicate that it is the "feeling guess" that is important to creativity. Intuition presupposes a contact between the intellect and a visceral reaction. If the gifted student with a high capacity to verbalize is only manipulating words, he must internalize and react to internalizations. This activity can be encouraged in an art class where open consideration of feelings in interactions is present. Cognitive considerations and intuition, when the two are in contact, foster creativity.

### **Development of Creativity**

The teacher must remove anxiety from the act of creation. If a situation of intellectual ease is present in the art class, manipulation of uniqueness, selections from the intuitive self, and aggregation of dissimilar elements will increase among the students. The maturing student is frequently forced to disclaim the child-self of spontaneity; yet this element is important in the development of the creative person. The creative act, which involves the reassembly of elements of the personal structure, cannot function effectively in a threatening environment.

### **Obstacles to Creativity**

The child first enters school full of curiosity and creative expression. Until now his "curriculum" has been self-directed and

self-selected. Simply as a means of satisfying his own needs, he has become capable of handling several complicated symbol systems; that is, language, social interaction, enumeration, and categorization. When any student reaches the art class at the intermediate level, however, he has experienced six to seven years of studies that have been chosen, directed, and manipulated by forces beyond his control. By this time most of the students lack curiosity, interest, and creativity. The gifted child, who is sensitive beyond others to the nuances of nonverbal communication, has especially geared his production to that which is expected. Even worse, he may have submerged his talents or become a nonparticipant.

The experience of the gifted student in art class has often been to see the art teacher approve of realism, conformity, and precision. The student has been asked to trace the outline of his own hand; to make baskets and rabbits; and to work in coloring books. What these assignments have done is to tell the child that he should see the world in a certain way and that not to see it in that way is wrong. Directed instruction that, for example, tells the student to "color the sky blue" and points out to him what are considered models of good art forces the student to submerge his own visions and perceptions. A teacher who instructs in this manner practices coercion. In this situation the child is torn between the desire to conform and to satisfy his own needs. The subtle implication behind the teacher's asking who wants to answer a question is the threat that not to answer will affect one's grades. As to those in whom creativity will appear only when conditions are favorable, the best lesson plans will fail unless creativity is welcomed enthusiastically.

### **Good Teaching Methods**

To assist students to develop creativity, the teacher can do the following:

1. Structure the class to encourage sensitivity. Ask the students to produce picture charades rapidly, an activity that can lead to fluency in ideas. Or ask the students to express concepts with as many applications as possible.
2. Present problems where similarities or differences can be enjoyed. Ask each student to (a) think of the ugliest idea he can conceive of and isolate elements of beauty from that idea; (b) construct in picture form paintings that represent resolved dichotomies; (c) use media that are potent with the unexpected (e.g., drippings of wet paint, brayer painting); and (d) work in media such as junk, light, film, and food.

3. Provide exercises where combining the unusual (e.g., orange slices and wheels) is rewarded and where the mundane is turned humorous (like tools to animals). Provide exercises where perception is altered, such as where an engine is drawn from the inside or where a chair appears as a hole in space.

It is insufficient to be ready to accept the unusual. The teacher must constantly be on guard to avoid an unintentional rejection. A statement such as "I like it, but..." implies that the teacher's approval determines the value of the personal product. Criticism must be drawn from the student.

### Evaluation of the Art Process

Evaluation of the art process by the use of letter grades must be changed. Ideally, evaluation is an examination of what has been accomplished in relation to what was to be accomplished. Because the objectives central to the art process are sensitivity, symbol capability, originality, fluency, articulation, and a sense of relationships, evaluation cannot be exclusively external. An evaluation system in which grades are established according to a predetermined ratio results in the teacher awarding as many F's as A's. Even worse, the system may imply reliance on the external aspects of neatness, skill, and a capacity to fulfill expectations (convergent production). Most gifted students already possess excellent skills, and many are able to excel in convergent production. If, however, this ability is the least valuable product of art study, then strong effort must be made in evaluation to rate the skill component after important personal goals have been considered.

### Project Critiques

Evaluation by the student and the teacher should be made after the completion of the art product, not during the process of creation. Critical thinking is as valuable in art as in any other subject, but such thinking may have to be sacrificed for the sake of developing other creative abilities. The application of the student's personal standards is most easily encouraged when the evaluation consists of critiques on a number of projects. Principles of guidance can be spelled out, but a general approach can function just as well. Questions that can be asked are "To what extent did I achieve what I set out to do?" and "What parts have been rendered most successfully?" Each student is unique. By means of the joint assessment made by teacher and student, the strengths and weaknesses and likes and dislikes of the student can be discovered and verbalized.

## Fluency and Growth

That a student uses the same or similar subject matter in each of several projects does not imply a lack of fluency. Historically, for example, Rodin concerned himself continually with the problems of figures, and Michaelangelo with the problems of muscular structure. The student will develop skill in handling a particular problem by varying his approach to it. Favorable consideration must also be given in evaluation to those things that contribute to the student's growth in creativity. Although difficult to determine, attitudes of independence in concept formation, willingness to risk exposure, and increased awareness of self and others should be considered in a final evaluation. Figure 1 should be helpful to both teacher and student in their efforts to evaluate the work of the art student. It should be noted that this evaluation form provides only an indication of potentiality. Unless further evaluations of the student are made, the teacher will be unable to make an accurate assessment of the student's work.

Figure 1  
Rating Checklist: Student Evaluation in Art

Component	Growth			
	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Safe</i>	<i>No exposure</i>
Sensitivity				
To environment				
To self				
Expression				
Symbol structuring				
Originality				
Humor				
Fluency				
Ideational				
Motor				
Articulation				
Ideational				
Figural				
Exploration				
Observation				
Motor skills				

## Development of Human Potential

Through his ability to use symbols, man is able to communicate. The process of communication is based on experience and on an awareness of that experience. Through the medium of art, a

summation of all experience can occur. Order in man is derived from his ongoing communication and an insatiable desire to continue the creative expression of this communication. To lead students to understand some minimal aspect of this uniqueness is to offer them a participation in humanity. Without the qualitative influence of aesthetics and without the intensification of experience in forms of art, full participation is nearly impossible.

### **Effects of Art**

Art can be pervasive in a life without the viewing of the paintings of Goya or Chagal if that life is touched with the congruence of self – a sensitivity to unity. Wild iris in the corner of a garden can, however, touch a person more deeply for having seen Van Gogh's painting of irises. And although colorful leaves in a stream, if they activate an inner exhilaration in the viewer, can surpass the beauty of a Japanese woodcut, one's experiencing of the beauty of the leaves is enhanced for having seen a woodcut by Hiroshige. The impact of participation leaves the student forever changed. The purpose of this publication is to clarify for the teacher the many ways in which he can work to ensure (1) that the gifted child is given an opportunity to change through his experience with art; and (2) that the changes he undergoes contribute to the increased development of his higher potential.

### **Art as Creative Living**

As our society becomes increasingly capable of providing for the needs of people with fewer hands, a rich and fulfilling life will demand some means of giving it dimension. The Puritan ethic is not as concerned with work as product as it is with the unifying function of the process. It is in this context that art may be viewed today as an aspect of creative living. The future will become less threatening to students if, somewhere in their schooling, they are given an opportunity to shed the fears of their inner projections and attain a state where the affective and the cognitive become a qualitative part of their life-style. Art then becomes the act of viewing reality with one's sharpest perceptions.

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