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Chapters 12 and 19

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Contemporary Art and Globalization

Summary

The authors read this week explore how the contemporary art world responds to and evolves with the changes created by globalization. In her chapter, "Globalization and Contemporary Art," author, Julie Marshall, creates a compelling discussion in which she breaks down and categorizes contemporary artists and art practices based on content themes and methods of art making that are manifestations of globalization. The themes and methods consist of *fusion* (blending), *layering*, *employing meaning of materials*, and *collage*. Marshall provides examples of contemporary artists that work with these conceptual strategies as a way to process globalization and provide a global perspective. In their chapter, "Transnational Visual Culture: Indecipherable Narratives and Pedagogy," authors, Charles R. Garoian and Yvonne M. Gaudelius provide an interesting analysis of how collage narrative or transnational narrative exists in an in-between zone that simultaneously speaks about globalization while also creating a contradiction or juxtaposition due the intrinsic nature of collage as a medium and as a method of visual discourse. While each of the authors tackles ways contemporary art exists in lieu of globalization, Marshall takes the approach of analyzing and synthesizing methods, styles, and themes explored by contemporary artists, whereas Garoian and Gaudelius perform more of a critique of how contemporary art, through the format of collage, has a dual or multiple function as it speaks in conjunction with the transnational narrative created from globalization while also functioning as cultural fragments that represent the individual, local, regional and personal. As Garoian and Gaudelius state, narrative collage/ transnationalism, "rather than homogenizing cultural diversity, the relational aesthetics and random materialism of collage/transnationalism encourages evocative associations among differing cultural perspectives" (p.148). They argue that through collage a "space" is created that allows us to think critically and engages thinking about the complexities of globalization. Marshall also promotes the evaluation of contemporary artists and art methods as a way to think critically about globalization, but by categorizing

contemporary art into commonly used art styles that have predominantly evolved from globalization, Marshal creates an accessible and useful way for students and teachers to contemplate the complexities that are explored by contemporary artists dealing with issues that arise from globalization. Marshal writes, “Contemporary art that addresses global realities provides fresh insights into the world and how others perceive and live in it” (p.96). Throughout both chapters, there is a consensus that it our responsibility, as art teachers, to engage our students in critical thinking in regards to globalization in order to, “move beyond our local understandings and reclaim agency within a transnational world,” (p.149). Through the analysis of contemporary art, artists, and collage narrative, as art teachers we can help in the developing of our students’ global consciousness.

Definitions of Terms/ Key Points:

Complex Connectivity: Described as the, “critical force behind globalization” (p.88), it encompasses how globalization simultaneously creates homogenization while also creating a resistance to the loss of cultural identity.

Fusion: “In art, fusing is a strategy of blending art forms and ideas and crossing borders,” (p.89). Fusion is a method that blends visual culture and ideas that are from different cultures creating a new hybrid visual culture that is understood and accessible cross culturally.

Layering: An art style that involves using traditional methods and styles, often traditional icons that have cultural significance and power, and combining these methods and imagery to create new meanings to discuss contemporary issues (p.90).

Collage: Extending beyond the traditional definition of collage, contemporary artists use collage to create strong juxtapositions that create irony and tension (p.93).

Global Consciousness: “The ability to place oneself and ones life within the context of the entire planet—to see things globally” (p.96).

Collage Narrative: “Disjunctive fragments of visual, textual, and material culture” (p.143), that reflects multiple ways of creating meaning in response to contemporary issues.

Transnationalism: Refers to the distribution of cultural capital as a product of globalization. In a discussion of TNCs (transnational corporations), Garoaian and Gaudelius explain how there is a unified world economic system in which, “systems of supply, production, marketing, investment,

information transfer and management,” all travel on the same paths across global borders (p.146).

Personal Reflection

As a lover and follower of contemporary art and artists, there are so many artists that create as a way to process or as a result of globalization. Two artists that come to mind are American artist, Laurie Hogin and South Korean born artist, Gimhongsok. . Hogin is an American painter that received her BFA from Cornell University in 1985 and her MFA from SAIC in 1989. Her paintings fuse traditional Baroque methods of painting with a contemporary palette of colors and socio-political issues. From addiction to prescription pills, to the consumption of fast food and ties to obesity, to the obsession with materialism, consumerism and the human capacity for greed, Laurie Hogin explores what humanity has evolved to be and our global realities. Her use of monkeys and animals refers to raw animal instinct and the lack of the human ability to control emotions and impulses. She uses the traditional formalism of painting to discuss contemporary issues as a way to elevate status and the severity of the socio-political content of her art. Her artwork becomes accessible through media, and the long history of Western painting tradition allows all viewers to understand the content and meaning of her artwork. Her paintings reflect globalization because the issues that she explores, although predominately criticism of American society, have become global issues due to homogenization. The artist, Gimhongsok, is a multi-media conceptual artist that creates compelling installations and sculptures. Gimhongsok’s piece, *Boat* (200-2007), is a collaborative sculpture that evolves and is reinvented with each location it is displayed. Wherever it is displayed, employees at the museum are instructed to bring in objects and food items that they cannot live without and define who they are. The result is a collection of CDs, snack foods from Asian markets, clothing, and a random assortment of paraphernalia. When the viewer approaches the sculpture, they can discern that the boat is that of a refugee. In this refugee boat though, the viewer has to make sense of the assortment of commodities represented. The viewer immediately starts to put the pieces of the puzzle together trying to identify the cultural background of the refugee boat, but it is impossible. The collection of goods is too diverse and is a representation of our global identity. No matter where the boat travels, the items it collects makes it impossible to fully identify because our consumer culture has expanded beyond borders in light of globalization.

As an artist, I find myself incorporating more layering, more fusion, and placing a higher emphasis on the materials I use and the implications and meanings that are inferred. When I was a student of art in college, I fell under the spell of formalism and believed that being an outstanding figure drawer

and oil painter was what gave me my talent and right to be a successful artist. I now realize I was a kid and had a lot to learn. Although I place a high emphasis still on the understanding and application of formal techniques and craftsmanship, I have fully embraced the post-modern art expression of today and place a heavy emphasis on conceptualism, use of materials, and communication to a particular audience in my classroom practice. I show more contemporary artwork in my classes because my students and myself can relate to the content and we glean the formalist tradition through the rich development of each of these contemporary artists backgrounds as they discovered their voices as artists. I have found myself abandoning my oil paints and exchanging my rich color palette to that of the equally rich colors of dyed fabrics and yarns. As an adult, I realized that I can paint and draw as well with my love of knitting, sewing, beading, and handcrafting...in fact, I can do it better; it is less of a fight and more pure enjoyment. It feels good to paint with yarn. Perhaps this development in my art making is related to *glocalization*. Growing up in the Midwest and in a traditional family that modeled the traditional roles of women in the household, I learned to knit, sew and craft. I definitely can see how my local cultural background helped aid in the development of such a passion for traditional women's crafts. As a contemporary artist, I am always considering themes of identity, place, time, spirituality, and humanity, which are all relative themes to globalization. I am inspired by contemporary art that dissects and connects and creates a dialogue with our human experience as it exists right now, in the moment we are living today.

References:

Garoian, C. R., & Gaudelius, Y. M. (2009). Transnational visual culture: Indecipherable narratives and pedagogy. In E. M. Delacruz, A. Arnold, M. Parsons, and A. Kuo, (Eds.), *Globalization, art, and education* (pp. 142-150). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

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