

## Reading Review Two

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Stankiewicz, M. A. (2001). Anyone Can Learn to Draw. *Roots of art education practice*. (pp. 1-20). Worcester, MA: Davis Publications.

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### ***Summary:***

The history of art education in the United States begins with recognizing the need for skilled designers in industry to make products that were competitive in the world market. The United States did not have a strong foundation of artists and designers, causing manufacturers to hire European designers, which was very expensive. In the 1860s, drawing instruction was implemented into the school curriculum to address the need for draftsman and designers in the nation's workforce. By educating America's youth in drawing and the foundations of art and design, society would gain skilled workers at lower labor costs and be able to compete with the manufacturing and exporting of textiles, furniture, and decorative objects.

During the inception of art education into the mainstream curriculum of public schools in the United States, several advocates rose to the forefront of the movement. One of the most important leaders in shaping the development of art education curriculum was Walter Smith, a gentleman who had studied art and served as a school principal in his home country, England. Smith was an advocate of industrial design and his methods of art instruction were based on technical drawing skills. Although his drawing approach mimicked that of the already existing art education in American schools, his methods were fun and even game-like, encouraging students to continue with drawing and boosting self-confidence. Smith created art teacher manuals and eventually published a series of drawing textbooks. As a result of a controversy with a business partner, Walter Smith left the United States and returned to England. Not long after he left, his methods of instruction were deemed as too authoritarian and teachers went back to a looser approach to art education. Smith's business partner, Louis Prang, would continue to mold the development of art education and of art supplies.

Louis Prang was a lithographer and business man who partnered with Smith because he saw the profit in educating Americans to become skilled artists and designers as a way to keep cost of wages down. Smith used Prang's lithographs to illustrate his series of books. Prang was a

successful business man and knew the value of listening to customer needs and changing a product to meet the demands and needs of the consumer. In the absence of Smith, he published a new model of drawing books that outlined three types of drawing methods: constructive, representational, and decorative. Constructive drawing focused on developing technical and mechanical drawing skills, whereas representational and decorative drawing placed an emphasis on observation and relying on correctly seeing objects and translating what the eye sees into accurate drawings. Drawing from representation and an emphasis on drawing from nature became the dominant methods of drawing instruction throughout the school curriculum.

During the late 1800s, educators and psychologists began to think differently about the natural development of children and modifying the education structure in regard to child development. Psychologist, G. Stanley Hall, believed that, “the institution should be adapted to meet the needs of the child rather than teach the child to adapt to the institutional needs and norms” (p. 18). Hall’s studies, data, and articles helped change the approach of educating children and placed an emphasis on valuing children’s thoughts, emotions, and creativity. Stanley believe in letting children draw un-hindered in the early stages of development so that drawing would remain, “...a real expression of the child’s soul, and the child should copy what he, and not the adult, sees” (p. 19). Although psychologists and educators understood the value of the freedom of expression and creativity in response to child development, education supervisors remained critical of the caliber and technical ability of drawings produced from the public school curriculum. Mechanical drawing was still regarded as superior, even though on a whole, art education had moved away from industrial drawing. As a result, in the turn of the century, there was a greater investment made to train and hire more qualified art teachers in order to meet society’s need for professionally trained artists and designers.

Art education continues to evolve today and is redefined with each new era to meet the demands of contemporary society, much the same as it began, in the mid-1860s, to meet the nation’s needs during the Industrial Revolution. Throughout the course the last one hundred years, art educators have battled with art’s place and function within the school curriculum. Walter Smith introduced art and design into school’s to fulfill the need of designers in the American workforce. As art education transformed though the next three decades though, educators struggled with the authoritarian doctrines developed by Smith and his contemporaries because of the free and expressive nature of children and art. Creativity became the focus of art

education at the turn of the century. Even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, though, the struggle to find a balance between freedom of expression, creativity and formal application remains an issue still debated in the implementation of art education in the public school curriculum.

## ***Key Points:***

Louis Prang released a series of drawing books that outlined three types of drawing instruction in the 1880s:

\* ***Constructive Drawing*** includes methods that focused on technical and mechanical drawing skills. This method provided instruction on how to make diagrams, plans, geometric views, and control scale and proportion. Constructive drawing prepared students for industrial design and the world of manufacturing.

\* ***Representational Drawing*** was modeled after the increasingly popular Pestalozzian pedagogy, which focused on teaching students to look carefully at their subject matter and articulate what one sees in front of them into a realistic drawing. This method of drawing instruction is still the popular method of teaching realism today. The belief is that once the student has the ability to see correctly, then the representation of the drawing should translate to appear in the drawing as the object appears to the eye.

\* ***Decorative Drawing*** was based primarily on drawing from nature as a tool to embellish and create ornamentation. There is a very long history of natural growth serving as ornamentation and in the late 1800s, decorative drawing skills were considered important in becoming a designer.

## ***Personal Reflection:***

It is not a surprise to me to learn the inception of art education into the mainstream school curriculum evolved out of capitalistic needs. It is surprising to me though that over a century later, some of the issues in defining and defending art education's role in the school curriculum reflect the same issues that were present over one hundred years ago. During the mid-1800s, America was behind the curve artistically and it is easy to understand that providing instruction

in mechanical and industrial drawing addressed a necessary social need. It is interesting to learn that art education theorists were determining the goals and structure for the implementation of the art curriculum, and art teachers were finding this instruction method authoritarian and unnatural. I feel that this is still an issue that the art education world struggles with today. Theory and practice have a symbiotic relationship, but they remain two distinctly different entities. In contemporary society, art education advocates are still defining and defending the role of art education in the school curriculum and art teachers are still struggling to validate art as an integral part of the student's learning process. Outsiders to the art world remain critical and ignorant of the objectives of art education and remain ingrained in the modernist tradition that talent and skill level of art students are reflected by realism and of art as a commercial tool. Most art teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century have abandoned traditional teaching practices of drafting, calligraphy, type-setting, and mechanical drawing and have replaced the old methods of teaching these still valid design needs through the use of computer software. I believe that the social needs of the 1860s are still relevant today, and formal design skills and methods are pertinent to the art education curriculum in developing well trained designers to support a healthy national workforce. What we understand today though that varies greatly from the mindset of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, is that art and design serve a greater and diverse function in regards to commercial, social, and individual needs. Art education has evolved immensely from the 1860s where the ultimate objective was to create designers to fill a void in the nation's work force and provide lower wages for labor than the pre-existing method of hiring foreign labor at a greater expense. Today art education curriculum serves to help students develop self-identity, self-confidence, and to understand what it means to be human and living in a global society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Art education always reflects contemporary society, and even though our world has evolved greatly since the mid to late 1800s, the United States remains a capitalist society; therefore, art education will continue to address the country's economical needs.