

## Reading Review Two

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Stankiewicz, M. A. (2001). Every Day a Festival. *Roots of art education practice*. (pp. 67-83). Worcester, MA: Davis Publications.

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### ***Summary:***

Holiday art and seasonal activities became an increasingly popular trend in the art education curriculum at the turn of the nineteenth-century. Led by art education advocate and editor of *School Arts*, Henry Turner Bailey saw a need for social reform and believed art education could address several societal concerns. With industrialism came a new concept of work-time and leisure-time. In order to promote appropriate use of time-off on holidays, social reformers encouraged lower class factory workers to spend time with their families doing upper class activities, like going to museums, taking walks in the park, and reading, versus the common practice of heavy drinking. The structure of school was modeled after factories, as teachers were charged with the task of preparing students for the industrial work force. Bailey regarded the environment and daily routine as monotonous and saw a need for school beautification and a reprieve for students from the daily drizzle. He encouraged, through his *School Arts* publication, that art teachers provide projects and activities inspired by holidays and seasonal events as a way to promote morality, educated non-American born students about American culture, and as a way to escape by doing something pleasurable. Bailey also occasionally published project ideas and information about holidays and festivals from non-western cultures, but most of his projects promoted the aesthetic culture of America and Northern Europe. He was also aware that although most students would not pursue careers in the arts, all would become consumers, and promoted art educators to provide a strong background in decoration and aesthetics in order to develop good taste. Although Bailey had the best intentions for the inclusion of holiday and seasonal art into the curriculum, the content of art education became reduced to generalized activities that were more symbolic than meaningful. Unfortunately, “holiday art contributed to the marginalization of art as a school subject and to the displacement of art from work to entertainment” (p. 74). Art education had become a beautification campaign and teachers were

assuming the responsibility of creating aesthetically pleasing school environments filled with aesthetically aware future consumers.

## ***Key Influences:***

\* ***Education Reform:*** Art education provided an outlet for students to be creative and have fun, much like the needed reprieve holidays gave to the working class from the daily monotony of factory work. By focusing on holidays and drawing from nature, highlighting seasonal changes and festivities, students were reminded of the meaning of holidays/ festivals and a counterbalance was created in contrast to the, “evils of modern life” (p. 73). Although the intention of the inclusion of holiday art into the art curriculum was to infuse the daily routine with culture, moral values, and bring urban society back to nature, it backfired and became about entertainment and lost most, if not all, of the content.

\* ***Aesthetic Reform:*** In the modernist era, the focus was on industrialism, capitalism, and consumerism. Bailey was aware that most students would not pursue careers in the arts, so he encouraged art teachers to become “taste-makers,” providing skills in developing aesthetic taste as well as artistic skills. In the nineteenth-century, it was believed that, “beauty in one’s material environment led to refinement of the soul” (p. 76). Art teachers were charged with the role of school beautification and encouraged to work with the community in order to bring art and beautification out into the city as well. Society and education advocates believed that students observed better behavior and learned better in a nicely painted and decorated environment.

\* ***Social Reform:*** Along with the rise of industrialism came a new interpretation of time. “Rural workers in preindustrial societies could stop work when they wished, talk to co-workers, or take several days off for local holidays. In contrast to this holistic integration of work and leisure, industrial time was segmented, controlled by management” (p. 70). By focusing on holiday art at school, the education curriculum reinforced both the moral values observed for the holiday as well the value of leisure time amidst the rigid work/ school schedule. Holiday art also encouraged individuals to develop an appreciation of the arts in hope of deterring the working class from participating in undesirable leisure activities, such as heavy drinking. Holiday art also served as a form of propaganda, educating non-native born American children on the histories

and cultural importance of holidays and festivals. Through the study of patriotic and religious holidays, art educators instilled American values and traditions in their students.

## ***Personal Reflection:***

Holiday celebrations, seasonal activities, and annual festivities are cultural manifestations that often have rich artistic traditions. There are many wonderful reasons to teach about holidays and the artistic heritage associated with holidays. Holidays and seasonal celebrations are practiced all over the world; teaching about the many customs of the world help students to be culturally sensitive, promote multiculturalism and allow individuals to better understand their own cultural identities. I fully support the teaching of holidays as a method to promote cultural tolerance as well as to teach meaning and content of traditional art styles and practices. My definition of holiday art is rich in tradition, culture, and historical meaning; it is not what has commonly become known as “holiday art.” When people think of holiday art, they think of construction paper and cotton balls to make cookie-cutter Santa Clauses, snowmen, Easter Rabbits or Easter Eggs, hand-turkeys, pilgrim hats or Indian headdresses, shamrocks, etc. That is not holiday art, though, those are examples of step-by-step projects that result in very similar looking projects that reflect the consumer symbolism of the holiday and are devoid of all cultural and historical significance. As Stankiewicz presents throughout chapter four, the inclusion of holiday art into the art education curriculum started out as a positive educational tool, but ended up becoming trivial craft projects that’s main function served as school beautification. Art education regressed into entertainment and recreation, mimicking the leisure mentality of holidays. Over one hundred years later, art educators are still combating this misrepresentation and misunderstanding of what art education encompasses. What a mess. Aesthetics and beautification are part of the art making process, but they are not the end-all-be-all of art education. I totally support and encourage art teachers to display student art, have annual art shows, and celebrate the final products created by art students. It is as important to highlight student achievement as it is to make our school community aware of how productive we are and what our students are learning. With that, I also encourage all teachers to put a brief statement along with art displays that explains the learning objectives of projects. This also helps educate teachers, administration, parents and other students about how to read and look for meaning in art. Beautification should never be the primary objective of art education, but is certainly alright

is the school becomes more beautiful because of the artwork displayed. As for art teachers being “taste-makers” in the school and greater community, that is an out of date misunderstanding of the role of the art teacher. We need to keep educating society and our community members that we teach meaning and content about the human experience and what it means to be a global citizen in contemporary society, and very little of that has anything to do with decoration and ornamentation. When asked to be part of “beautification” projects, we need to politely explain that those tasks are better suited for parents to help out with; that the amount of time needed to do such activities takes away from essential learning and teaching. Hopefully someday, as long as we keep working at it, we will overcome the negative effects of our modernist fathers of art education. There was a lot of damage created, and this chapter helped me understand it a lot better, but it is still a daunting task. I will keep sweeping up the mess; I’ve taught over one-thousand five-hundred students, and most, if not all, come away with a new understanding of what art is...it is the cross-roads of all academic studies, a reflection of our human experience as we are living and breathing it today. I might be a small drip in a large pail, but I know I am contributing to it filling up, and hopefully someday it will be overflowing.