

Statement

Children do not know enough about contemporary art. Many schools do not teach children about modern day artists and this negatively affects their conception of art. Art education should be restructured to include teachings of present-day art. This will not only benefit children but also work to demystify common beliefs about contemporary art. It will make art more accessible for children.

Arguments

The first order is to clarify what contemporary art is and clear some confusion about it. Many art educators in both private and public schools are either unaware or perplexed by modern day art. Julia Marshall and David M. Donahue, authors of *Art-Centered Learning Across the Curriculum: Integrating Contemporary Art in the Secondary School Classroom*, state "What makes contemporary art difficult and off-putting for many viewers, and the questions this art raises, are what make it ideal for authentic integrative inquiry," (Marshall 4). The speculative nature of contemporary art is akin to the nature of children; they are curious and absorb information like a sponge. If children are exposed to contemporary art, they would have a better understanding of how the art world works and broaden their cultural horizons.

In some countries, such as Japan, they expose children to visual art at an early age to teach about the country's past. The art education system in the United States is flawed. *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* by Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, Shirley Veenema, and Kimberly M. Sheridan is a book about the benefits of visual arts. To quote the book, "All too often the arts have been considered a luxury in our schools... With mandated, standardized tests in mathematics, reading, and language arts administered each year, the focus of schools shifted to raising test scores in these areas," (Hetland 1). The education system is based on improving test scores in academic subjects. When schools need to perform budget cuts, the arts, be it visual, theater, or music, are usually the first to go. Children who come from low-income families, communities, and school districts suffer from lack of a proper art education. Most states have art education requirements, but they can be improved. If we could create a method of teaching contemporary art to these children and made art more accessible to them, it would be a step in the right direction for a new art education system.

Art education is crucial for a child's development. Art making improves fine motor skills. Art provides a language of self-expression. It can also be used as a visual encyclopedia for teaching. Sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz said "Art does not solve problems, but makes us aware of their existence." Art can teach children about real world issues at a young age. It improves their cultural awareness and critical thinking.

Gigi Antoni said "DALI [Dallas Arts Learning Initiative] was created on one unabashedly idealistic, yet meticulously researched, premise -- that students flourish when creativity drives learning." There are plenty of studies that show a direct positive correlation between academics and involvement in art activities. Art education should be required for children of all ages.

Counterargument

To some, art education isn't valuable. In Oklahoma, they recently cut art funding due to their staggering debt. In her article "The Anti-Art Education Stance," Nicole Kirchner states "If a child never learns addition, they will never be able to survive in society today. If your child never learns to paint, though, they will be absolutely fine." She also goes on to say the primary reason for art being removed from schools is due to budgeting and costs. The biggest enemy of arts education is funding and money. Since there are many music, theater, and visual arts programs for children outside of school, art education is deemed as unnecessary in some schools.

Introduction

My thesis will focus on using art to teach art. I propose an exhibition that will have artworks created by me that are intended to show the following issue: contemporary art is not taught enough at schools. The exhibition will show research and data on why art education is not where it needs to be as well as interviews with educators, children, and artists. It will also illustrate ways to make contemporary art more accessible for all.

Cultural Statement

The thesis project is heavily involved in the present-day art world. It will tie in with the history of art education by hopefully changing the way or shining some light on how art is presently taught in the United States. By observing how art education is taught in other nations throughout the world, I plan to make contemporary art understandable for children.

Motivation

When I was a junior during my undergraduate studies, (I majored in Studio Art), I created a video for a digital art project. I interviewed my cousin's nine year old daughter and asked her how she perceives art, what she likes about art, and which artists she knows. The results surprised me: the most recent artist she could name was Jasper Johns. I wondered how much children in the United States knew about contemporary art. I worked in a museum the following summer, essentially as a counselor for kids attending summer art camp. The program focused on teaching the children about art by using its museum space. However; the children seemed more interested in building their lighthouse papier-mâché sculptures than learning about the artworks in the museum. I tried to figure out a way to make art education enjoyable with a firmer emphasis on present-day works.

Artistic Strength

My idea itself is to create an art show about educating contemporary art using art.

Originality

I am not sure if there have been many art exhibitions that focus on teaching contemporary art to children. The artwork and interviews will be original. I hope for children to become interested in contemporary art instead of just doodling on iPads and building stick houses.

Potential Impact

If everything worked out perfectly, my thesis project would get kids to ask their parents to take them to Chelsea for gallery hopping. It would also demystify common misconceptions about contemporary art and improve the quality of art education while making it more accessible to students and children, regardless of family background, income, and location in the United States.

Interesting Findings

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-importance-of-art-in-child-development/>
<http://www.artseveryday.org/StudentsAndFamilies/detail.aspx?id=230>
<http://www.nyc-arts.org/>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8a_rN6Ne10
<http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:2128/artbibliographies/docview/1559844574/8052C631BB2A4368PQ/1?accountid=12768>
<http://www.urbanarts.org/>

Techniques and Media

I may include video editing, game design, and interdisciplinary art for my project. I could create an interactive game where children walk around a gallery space and interact with artworks in the game to learn about contemporary art.

Contribution to Digital Media

I hope that my project gets children interested in digital art. There are several contemporary artists out there that make fascinating work using digital media, such as Rafael Rozendaal, Corey Archangel, and Miltos Manetas.

References

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