Peggy Phelan, Kevin Concannon, Irina D. Costache, Kathleen Desmond, David Little, and Steve Shipps. “Art History Survey: A Round-Table Discussion,” *Art Journal* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 32-51.

Art Journal
Vol. 64, no. 2
Summer 2005

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Art Journal (ISSN 0004-3249) is published quarterly by the College Art Association, 275 Seventh Ave., 18th floor, New York, NY 10001. 212.691.1051, ext. 214. E-mail: artjournal@collegeart.org. Web site: www.collegeart.org. Copyright © 2005 College Art Association, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of the contents may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher, the author(s), or other rights holders. The opinions expressed in this journal are those of the authors and not necessarily of the editors and the College Art Association.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Art Journal*, College Art Association, 275 Seventh Ave., 18th floor, New York, NY 10001. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Printed by Science Press, Ephrata, PA. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Cover: Fred Wilson. *Safe House II*, 2003. Ceramic pot containing bed, TV, lamp, and reading material. Courtesy of Pace Wildenstein. Photograph: R. Ransick/A. Cocchi. See p. 14.

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Peggy Phelan, Kevin Concannon, Irina D. Costache, Kathleen Desmond, David Little, and Steve Shipps

Art History Survey: A Round-Table Discussion

At the College Art Association 2003 annual conference, the editorial board of Art Journal convened a round-table discussion on the art history survey: why it continues to exist, who teaches it and how is it taught, and what have been effective challenges and innovations to its traditional form. Participants engaged in a spirited, substantive, and inconclusive discussion. Organizer and moderator Peggy Phelan (then chair of the Art Journal editorial board) proposed that this conversation on pedagogy should continue. She convened a round-table discussion, via e-mail, on the survey course with several experienced teachers and scholars. During the course of the conversation, Kathleen Desmond noted, "The Carnegie Foundation found that 80 percent of college teaching faculty listed teaching as their primary interest. Yet we barely discuss teaching. Treating teaching in the same ways we treat research and art making can revitalize and legitimize the essential component of our jobs as college professors." With these points in mind, we are publishing excerpts from the e-mail discussion, hoping it might provoke further consideration of and dialogue about teaching the arts and art history in the new century.

Peggy Phelan: I have been intrigued by the persistence of the survey course as a staple of art history programs, despite extremely radical transformations in the ideological and methodological foundations of the field, transformations in the skills and demographics of college students, and profound revisions in the curricula of PhD programs in art history. Given these changes, it would seem logical that the survey would become an obsolete, archaic technology in a postmodern world. I know it is cost-effective for universities to offer these large courses, but I think there is more than money behind the survey's persistence. Many students love to take survey courses, and many people love to teach them. Have you observed this? If so, to what do you attribute this? And if this is not your sense of things, I would like to hear your thoughts about successful alternatives or replacements for the survey.

The Survey

David Little: I agree with Peggy that many students are hungry for the survey. They want a body of knowledge and desire facts, landmarks, and themes to hold together the complex histories of artistic practices, institutions, and aesthetics. They seem to say, just give me one history for now and then I will adjust it, reject it, destroy it. I think of the survey as a rough framework that helps students begin to think about a theme, period, movement, subject, and so on, but I always remind them of the biases that help to construct the history presented and that the selected content discussed is always, in some sense, contingent. Even though it is often unfashionable to teach chronologically, I maintain this format to help students maintain a sense of context and history. From the few, key timeposts that I give students, I encourage them to develop their own. Most of the students I have taught, however, do not have a sense of the historical trajectory of the twentieth century, and by this I do not mean linear trajectory. I mean simple historic facts, such as Dada emerged during World War I, Surrealism between the wars, and Freud wrote over a hundred years before Oprah and Dr. Phil came to television.

The visual essay that accompanies this article represents the work of several contemporary artists engaged in complex issues surrounding the notion of art history. While this selection is in no way comprehensive, it articulates the varied ways in which art history (as well as those who create it, destroy it, maintain it, and alter it) continues to provide controversial subject matter in current art practices The images were selected by Amy Papaelias.

Steve Shipps: I should stress that I don't teach survey, per se. At Emerson, Visual Arts 101 is an "appreciation" course with a historical component, but no more than that. At least half of the eighty students per term who take it expect that it will be a survey of art history, and for most of the students the clear assumption is that to know about "art" is to know about "art history," and vice versa. The other students seem about equally divided between those who do know and care some about art *and* art history, and those who neither know nor care, nor care to know, about either (those dragged kicking and screaming to the course by distribution requirements). Save for these latter few, though, I take it that Peggy's sense that "many students love to take survey courses" is justified . . . at least, before the fact.

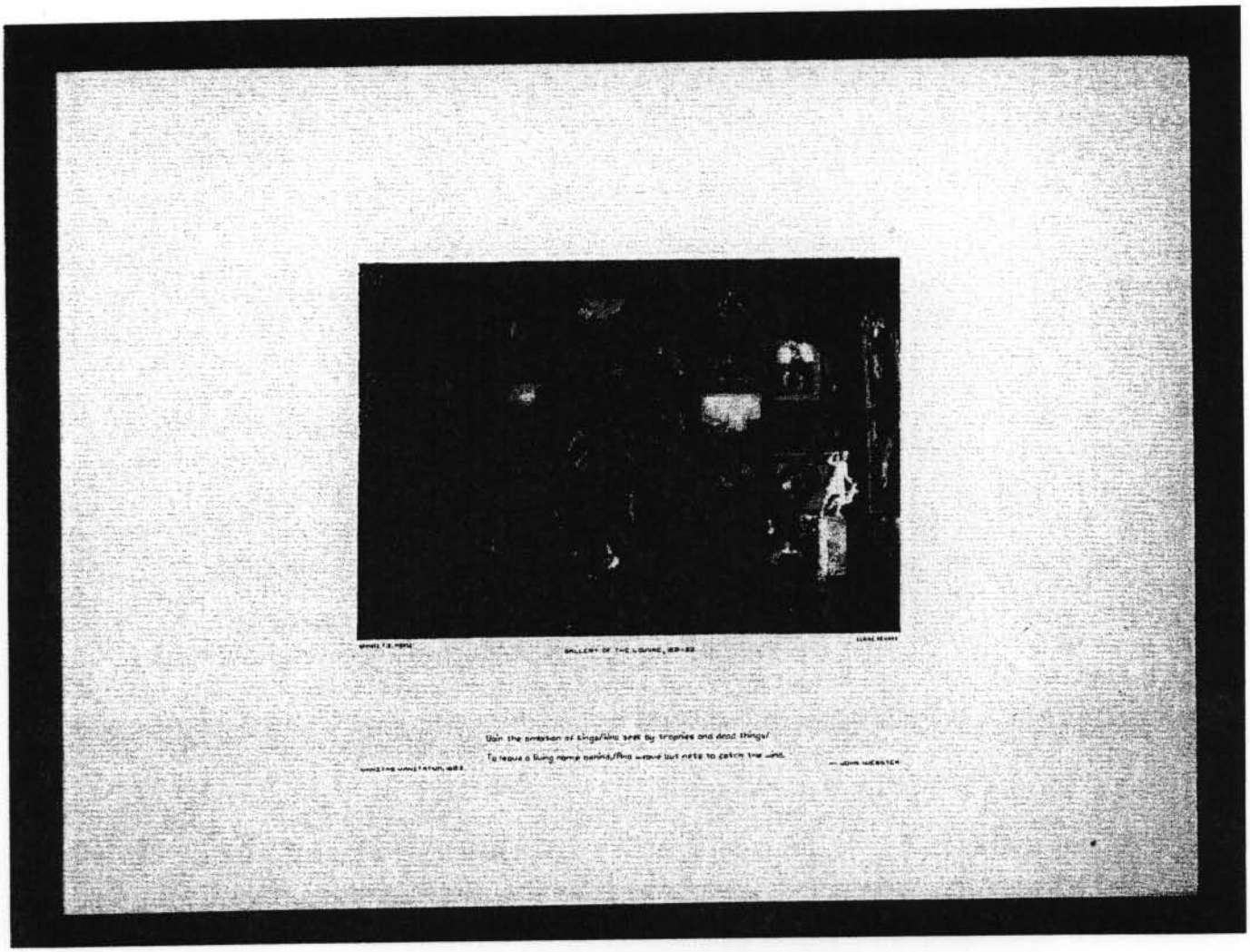
A few years ago, the Education Committee sponsored an open session at the CAA conference, entitled "What Do First-Year College Students Know about Art, Anyway?" We asked attendees to comment on any gaps or deficiencies they typically found in their first-year students' preparation for college art courses. Virtually every person who spoke verified what I had long suspected. They said that their students had no real sense of what artists did that was any different from what anybody else did, and/or they said that their students had no real idea of what relevance art had to their lives.

In my experience, whether or not undergraduates in introductory courses are aware of those perceived "deficiencies" in themselves when they enter such courses, by the time the discussion moves much beyond, say, the Impressionists, those gaps, unless they've been clearly addressed en route, tend to manifest in varying states of bewilderment, often unto outrage: "How could this be art? And what could it have to do with me?" And if that happens, of course, a lot fewer are pleased to have taken the course by the time it's over than loved it when they arrived.

So survey courses like the two that I took in the mid-1960s—which assume that art is self-evidently worthwhile and therefore so is its history—are, I think, obsolete anachronisms, if only pragmatically. Though surely a lot of them still exist, unreconstructed, taught perhaps by junior faculty who have "higher" scholarly aspirations and often *don't* love doing so. But my sense and hope is that those surveys that everybody does love, at both ends, are likely *not* like the traditional ones, in that to one degree or another, they actively confront student "deficiencies" and the radical shifts in the field, and deal with them directly in the context of the course.

Irina D. Costache: The challenge of the survey courses has to do with the enormous amount of information students (most of the time with no art or art history background) are exposed to in a short period of time. Moreover, the survey and those teaching it truly define what is and what is *not* art. Therefore, this course, its content and methodologies, is important not only to education, but also to the future of the arts. Yet these crucial elements are often ignored in the academic environment. Being a lower-division course, the survey has a certain stigma, and few senior faculty are interested in teaching it. Some schools have even deleted the survey from the curriculum.

A fundamental objective of the survey is to make its content interesting and meaningful for a twenty-first-century audience. Therefore in my lectures,



Elaine Reichek. *Gallery of the Louvre*, 2004. Embroidery on linen. 38½ x 50½ in. (97.8 x 128.3 cm). Courtesy of Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York.

presentations, discussions, and assignments, I keep a chronological narrative, but establish relevant connections between the present and past through cross-chronological and cross-cultural examples. These comparisons introduce works of art from traditions and time periods not studied in the specific course, as well as images from popular culture and other "non-survey sources." This is not intended to dismiss familiar landmarks, but rather to expose the mechanisms through which art historians and the culture in general define aesthetic and artistic values. This approach provides students not only with a list of masterpieces, but also with the tools that allow them to evaluate and develop critical ways of looking and thinking about art. These strategies and other approaches, which some of you talked about, transform art and its history into a lively topic with meaningful implications for students. I now start the survey with an analysis of the field of art history. This introduction demystifies (a little bit) art and its history. Many students are intimidated by art and its interpretation.

Kathleen Desmond: As an art educator with thirty years of college art teaching experience, I most often teach using "group processing" (a 1980s term), now called "active learning." I am held in disdain by traditional art historians for not using two stuffed slide projectors in my classes and for ignoring compare-and-contrast

methodology and questions about names, chronology, and style on exams. I don't find any of this as important as students' remembering the "big ideas." And I want them to make these big ideas, this knowledge, their own.

When students found out that I used active learning teaching strategies, they begged to be in my class. They felt they didn't learn in the traditional art history survey class. Some colleagues chalked this up to my course being "easier." No Scantron tests, lots of group work, and the development of a community of art learners in classes of fifty to a hundred students. Requirements include two papers, two sets of drawings, oral and written class work, along with a required trip (and paper) to one of the two art museums in Kansas City. Visiting an art museum is a first in the lives of many of our first-generation college students. Some students ask what they should wear and if they are allowed to talk in the museum, indicating why they have not visited an art museum before. We take a lot for granted as art professors, and we need to try to remember what is was like before we devoted our lives to the study of art.

Many professors who teach the survey course teach the way they learned, with no consideration for the fact that students learn differently these days than they did. Some professors are also dedicated to the "canon" and cannot figure out how to get that canon taught if not by lecture—the way they learned. But the National Training Lab in Bethel, Maine, shows that the lecture method of teaching produces the lowest learner retention rate. When students are involved in teaching others, there is a 90 percent retention rate, practice by doing has a 75 percent retention rate, and discussion groups a 50 percent rate.

Shipps: Like Kathy, I understood Peggy's kick-off message to suggest that traditional surveys remain a staple of art history programs. She doesn't use the term, of course, and so perhaps Kathy and I are mistaken, but the context does seem to imply the "traditional" part. And insofar as that was Peggy's intent, then, obviously, Kathy's experience and my own suggest otherwise.

But where Kathy's emphasis is on the kinds of nontraditional ("nonlecture") teaching that optimally takes place in surveys today, mine is on content. My idea is that for any survey to be meaningful today, it must necessarily spend at least a little time presenting and discussing aesthetic theory.

My contention has long been that the subject matter of surveys is too vast and too complex to cover adequately in fourteen weeks, much less to cover in a way that leaves time for reflection unto conceptualization. Well, fine, you may say, then the epiphany can come later, even much later . . . but in my experience, most disinterested sophomores, operating without any working conceptual/theoretical grasp of what "art" is or why they're bothering with it, and faced with art based, to one degree or another, just in concept and theory (anything from, say, 1850 on), give up. And if they leave their surveys having given up, conceptually/theoretically, on the whole art enterprise (or even just the last couple of centuries of it), there's precious little in Western(ized) culture today to make them come back to art later.

All of which leads me to propose that today, to succeed, surveys must offer some considered, working theory, up front, about how students might think about what "art" means now and what it has meant in the past, what it might be, and why it's important. (And it needs to refer back to those working ideas

and theories, throughout.) Without such (nontraditional) input, we risk losing many of our students even before their survey is over.

This beginning is useful not just because there's a lot of theorizing in the arts lately, and so it ought to be acknowledged, as content. More fundamentally, I want to offer my students a way to think about art, a framework for sorting—meaningfully—the information we provide. I want them to *understand* art (as opposed to just knowing about it). They need that not only because art is so complex lately, but also because it's so removed from most of their experience, so marginalized in their culture . . . and because all these things together make for a subject matter that most of today's students are not developmentally prepared to grasp. Any number of studies have shown that the vast majority of undergraduates today are still operating at what Piaget called the "concrete operational" level. (How much this may or may not have to do with the dumbing down of American culture remains moot, as far as I know.)

The Mythical Survey

Phelan: It might be that we have this conceptual term "the survey course" that functions as a sort of ghost in the imagination of art history—the almighty professor holding forth on the same works with the same notes and the same slides in some kind of time-out-of-mind performance—but who, in the reality of our teaching and learning lives, never actually appears. Or if the ghost does appear, it does not take the form it holds in the field's imagination of it—an imagination we also share, even while we declare ourselves "other" to it.

Little: It's easy to treat the mythical, monolithic survey as the bad mother who doesn't raise her kids as well as we do, or as a past technology that is not as advanced as ours. I think it is a leap to assume that we all had the same survey and memorized the same slides generations ago, and that we did not learn something from the survey that is used today in new pedagogical approaches and selections of content. But if it were not for the grounding in something, flaws and all, that I had in what we might call a more traditional approach to art history (even this term traditional is problematic because there is a new kind of redundancy and tradition in art history today—Duchamp's urinal, the ready-made ad infinitum, *Olympia*, etc.), I do not believe that I would have comprehended the depths of deconstruction. (My education moved from traditional art history, to museum studies, to intensive critical theory.) All of the great contemporary critical thinkers (Derrida, Jameson, Foucault, Said, to name some favorites) are also well-trained classicists who draw upon a vast knowledge and understanding of the canon (Plato, Hegel, Marx, etc.) in their fields. Sure, I believe that students need to learn to think critically about customs, traditions, and ideology, but they need to have something to think critically about.

Textbooks

Shipps: When I speak of "traditional" surveys, I mean ones like those I took way, way back when: darkness-at-noon art history surveys, uncontextualized and (supposedly) self-justifying, two slides at a time, usually formally based, using

Hiroshi Sugimoto. *Queen Elizabeth I*, 1999. Black-and-white photograph. 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm). Courtesy of Sonnabend Gallery.

Janson or Gardner. For the exam, know who made what, where, and when, and be able to do a little formal analysis. You might be right, Peggy, that such courses have become the stuff of legend and myth, that nobody does it that way anymore. But, if it's any sort of index, the people who write the textbooks used in surveys today clearly don't think so—and presumably, they're responding to market demand (or perhaps they're responding to market demand as publishers describe it, which, given publishers' notorious conservatism, may be a different thing . . . but I think that, in fact, it's both). In any event, in graduate school fifteen years ago, I wrote a fifty-page qualifying paper as a preliminary to my thesis. I did a close read of the most-used college introductory texts at the time (I surveyed a carefully structured representative sample of fifty college programs, to determine which texts these were). Long story short, both Janson and Gardner—far and away the most-used history texts—did not address at all any of the increasingly thorny issues of definition, of category, of "lines," etc., attending art at the time. Janson just ignored them. The Gardner book explicitly refused to have anything to do with them. Nor did the appreciation texts do much better, though they typically did ask "What is art?" right off the bat, and in attempting to answer that question, they offered the sort of cosmic generalities and vast elliptical vagaries that many students have accordingly come to think of—and sneer at—as "artspeak." In my view, Preble's *Artforms*, back then, did better at defining art than most; McCarter and Gilbert's *Living with Art*, worse . . . but nobody did it very well.

I don't think a lot has changed, with one notable exception on that score, in such textbooks today. Anthony Janson has gotten as explicit about not dealing with questions of context and relevance as his father and his competitors used to be. A quick scan of Stokstad suggests to me that she's in essentially the same place. Among the current appreciation books, I'm aware of only one that grapples with current issues (now, vastly more crucial to understanding art than they were in 1988.) That's the current [2004] edition of *Living with Art*, by Mark Getlein (I know of this because, ironically, both Kathy Desmond and I were asked to contribute essays to its teachers' manual—to precisely the manual that seems to need them least). Anyway, when I did get to my thesis work thirteen years ago, I compared levels of meaningful learning about art in a by-the-(text)book, traditional introduction to visual art, with those in a course that was *exactly* the same *except* for the insertion, early on, of two lectures about aesthetic theory. The results were remarkable, even to me (who'd expected they'd be there)—the kids in that "intervention" course, who'd had their (latent?) issues and questions about "art" brought out in the open and addressed, left it having learned vastly more meaningfully than had their peers in the other, traditional section. It seems to me that such an intervention has become all the more critical to effective teaching about art, in the po-mo years since.

Phelan: It seems clear that no one here is in favor of upholding the traditional notion of how the survey is/was taught. If that notion of teaching the survey is now well and truly gone (or certainly on its way out), what functions in its place? What are the pleasures and achievements of the survey course (large historical sweep, large audiences, large range of artworks) that we want to hold onto even while we change the style, content, and purposes of this course?

Audience

Desmond: To begin a discussion of teaching, it is imperative to define audience—our contemporary students—and to try to figure out how they learn. Students are different in community colleges, regional comprehensive universities, research universities, private colleges, and art schools, and in their intent in studying there.

We want to study the level of cognitive development of our students, e.g., theories like those of William Perry, who developed a model of adult cognitive development from concrete (which is where most college age students are) to abstract (which is where *we* are). Concrete thinkers are not comfortable with ambiguity. They want to know the right or wrong answer. They are not critical thinkers . . . yet. It is our job to get them there. It is our job to teach students to think critically and to write and to research.

It is necessary to define the objectives of the course, selecting specific concepts to be learned. Teaching strategies are tied to these objectives and concepts. Finally, we evaluate what students have learned and assess how well we met our objectives. Put another way, how can we teach students about the content (objectives) in the given time frame (three or sixteen weeks) in a way that meets their learning needs (teaching strategies), and how do we know they learned what we set out for them to learn (assessment)?

Little: I have always found it a challenge adjusting to different groups of students: ESL, continuing-education students, artists, museum audiences, etc. But I am highly suspicious of forms of psychological or audience profiling because such assumptions place limitations on audiences, and how and what they can learn. This might lead to fulfilling the expectations that one has of audiences, particularly false ones, rather than inspiring, surprising, and expanding upon the wonderfully unexpected learning opportunities that arise in classroom interactions. I have found, for example, that many of the best, most insightful conversations are unplanned.

Adjusting to an audience is important, but pandering to students ultimately shortchanges their education. Stereotyping students' learning profiles is a problem, but I would not argue against the view that different groups of students (generations, majors, and backgrounds) have unique learning approaches. I don't know how to best reach all of these students individually within a class—especially large classes—or if it is possible to inspire everyone equally, but I do find that dedicated students rise to the occasion when given difficult assignments and when those assignments are taken seriously by the teacher. What I find important is to help students schedule their work (it is also nice not reading papers done the night before). When I give a long research paper, students must produce a proposal, bibliographic updates, drafts at different stages of the paper (all of which are evaluated along the way), presentations on the paper in order to consult with peers, and a final paper. I find there is great support for teaching students only what they *want* to learn. What would be better is to give them time to think, to read, to talk, and to write.

Desmond: Some college teachers say they refuse to "pander" to students by studying data about learning or teaching styles, and instead give hard research assignments with plenty of time for them to complete the assignments (this, the teacher thinks, prevents having to read papers written the night before). These naive ideas demonstrate an enormous lack of knowledge about teaching and learning.

What makes teachers think students know how to complete hard research assignments if they don't teach them? Teaching students how to successfully complete assignments is not pandering. It is good teaching. It is essential to recognize what students need to learn and to set out to teach them this. I find it extraordinary that anyone would think students won't write the paper the night before no matter how long they are given.

Issues about teaching/pedagogy include studies of "audience," our students, in our respective institutions. Art professors who teach theory, aesthetics, and art criticism see concrete thinking when they get questions like, "What happens to our grade if we pick the wrong interpretation?" David gave a good example: Students "want a body of knowledge and desire facts, landmarks, themes to hold together the complex histories of artistic practices, institutions, and aesthetics. They seem to say, just give me one history for now . . ." These are concrete thinkers. How do we move our students from concrete thinking to abstract/critical thinking? What do we need to know and what would help us develop strategies that would work for us as teachers, and for our students as learners?

College teachers even need to teach students how to comprehend what they read. Yes, read. Students these days don't read the way we did when we were in college. Contemporary students were brought up on MTV and video games. They "read" video images better than we can, but they don't read books—textbooks in particular. If you don't believe this, give a pop quiz after assigning a reading in the text and see how many students can pick the key points. How do students learn to analyze? How do they learn to describe what's there? Or to interpret and think critically so they can back up what they think about the meaning of an artwork?

Costache: The students we teach today are different from even fifteen years ago. Their diversity, knowledge, and identity are validated by new paradigms, and their operational framework is rooted within the electronic media, which has truly given them an edge over most faculty and a totally different visual and cognitive set of references. The information displayed on a screen is, to them, a vital resource. Understanding what they like, how they think, and who they are should be a priority for faculty. Unfortunately all of this is often ignored in the teaching process.

The survey, any course for that matter, should not be perceived as an end, with specific assessments attached to its completion. Rather, it should be the beginning of a journey. The true evaluation of students and learning objectives/outcomes comes not at the end of the semester, but rather after a year or two, maybe even later.

The survey should inspire students to visit museums without mandatory field trips, to look at images with confidence, and give them a sense of the value of art in general outside the academic environment and their degree requirements.

Vik Muniz. *Action Photo I (Pictures of Chocolate)*, 1997. Cibachrome. 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm). Courtesy of Brent Sikkema, NYC.

Assessment

Kevin Concannon: After many years as a museum educator, I managed a major project at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (funded by the Lila Wallace Foundation) that introduced me to evaluation as a tool for developing museum programs/audiences. It was an eye-opening experience. Curators and museum educators, generally speaking, seemed to assume that they knew what people needed to know, regardless of what people might think they wanted to know.

The mandatory evaluation component of the grant-funded project required us to have teaching (learning) goals, as well as concrete ways of measuring our success in meeting them. We were also required to define our intended audience and to survey them to determine their preexisting knowledge as it related to what we intended to teach them.

It was remarkable how effective this strategy was. Our mission with this project was to reach previously underserved African American communities with a collection of African art, and it was really amazing what the museum achieved through the evaluation strategy. Once the grant was over, it seemed to me that the marketing component held the only real lasting impact. With grant support seriously down nationally (in the mid-1990s), "revenue streams" became the focus rather than audiences, and I decided to return to school to get a PhD.

I loved being back in school. It was just as it had been fourteen years earlier when I earned my BA. Teachers lectured and showed slides. I took notes and studied flash cards for slide identification exams (and essays). But it seemed odd in graduate school that no teacher ever spoke about teaching—about how you do it. Seminars, I suppose, qualify as "active learning." But it seemed as true in the PhD program as it is in my classroom of artist-undergrads, that the same handful of people did the reading and carried the discussion—and the same people bluffed their way through the "conversation."

When I came to the University of Akron, I was thrilled to learn during my faculty orientation that a vice provost was newly on board with the specific charge of leading an initiative on the scholarship of teaching and learning. Tom Angelo, who is well known for his work on assessment, ran the Institute for Teaching and Learning and organized an annual year-long faculty symposium on the topic. I was fortunate to take it last year.

In the first meeting of the symposium, Tom surveyed the twenty or so faculty members (from a broad range of disciplines) about our learning styles. The overwhelming majority of us (he graphed it on the board) indicated that we learned best from lectures and reading. This was, apparently, a wholly predictable result. He promptly informed us that the *relatively few* people for whom this "lecture-reading" learning style was characteristic were disproportionately represented on faculty everywhere. Most of our students, as Kathy has pointed out, learn by doing. For the rest of the year, we continued to hear statistics along the lines of "the average lecture holds the average person's attention for a maximum of twenty minutes, after which point comprehension drops radically." (While we had piles of the best books and articles tossed at us weekly, Wilbert J. McKeachie's *Teaching Tips* was far and away the class favorite.)[1]

Having spent the previous year beefing up my lectures, I was not happy to hear this. I was convinced at this point that there could never be enough time

1. Wilbert J. McKeachie, with Barbara K. Hofer, et al., *McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

Kathleen Gilje. *Het Pelskin, Restored (After Rubens)*, 2002. Paper prepared with yellow clay and gray gouache, white gouache, silverpoint, bronze pencil. 20 x 14⅛ in. (50.8 x 35.9 cm).

to tell them everything they needed to know. My constant frustration was the seeming impossibility of balancing dialogue/class conversation with the delivery of information. It soon became clear, upon reflection, that the information was only really delivered as it was reframed and recontextualized by students themselves during the discussions.

We were required as part of the symposium to redesign one course. I chose the second half of survey ("Proto-Renaissance to the present"). In symposium, we spent time discussing the crucial importance of group work. Much to my horror, Tom told us that students often learn better from each other than from the teacher. This was due, to some degree, to their (more closely) shared experiences. Learning happens best when we can relate new knowledge to something we already understand. We also learned that typical freshmen have the expectation that there is a (single) correct answer to each question. If you can't answer their question definitively, you are inept in their estimation—or perhaps the field of art history is a fraud. Only about 50 percent of seniors reach the point intellectually at which they accept (and embrace) the idea that there are often multiple, equally correct/plausible answers. For my Survey II revision, I chose three works of art evenly spaced over the course of the semester for "jigsaw" assignments. Dividing the class into four groups, each group read a different essay about the same work of art. (I used those books that compile essays reflecting various methodologies about the same work: the Norton Critical Studies in Art History and the Cambridge Masterpieces of Western Painting.) Each student prepared a written summary of her or his article as the "ticket" to class. They each brought two copies, one of which they gave to me. The other copy helped them explain "their" interpretation to their other group members, each of whom presented a different interpretation. They tried to come to agreement on the "correct" one, and generally decided that they are (almost) all valid. They became advocates for some rather off-the-wall interpretations and convinced each other of their validity.

Other strategies include "minute papers," for which the instructor interrupts class and asks students to anonymously summarize the main points of the lecture thus far in a one-minute paper. Problems in understanding emerge quickly and can be addressed before moving on. Students are asked to introduce themselves to another student and exchange papers. Reading the papers is still anonymous to the group as a whole, but students have made another contact in the class. This introducing is seen as especially important for first-year students, as the ones who leave often do so because they have made no connections at school.

Desmond: There are a variety of learning theory sources, e.g., *Models of Teaching* (Bruce Joyce and Marsha Weil) and strategies for teaching (Magnan). Theorist Paulo Freire writes about what it means to be human and to engage in relationships of all kinds, including teaching and learning and mentoring relationships. Parker Palmer writes about the spirit of teaching. William Perry is a cognitive-development theorist, and Craig Nelson teaches about critical thinking and how to approach teaching it.[2] Developing successful teaching strategies, like the ones Kevin and I advocate on active learning, are promoted by AAHE (American Association of Higher Education) and POD (the Professional and Organizational Development network, based at Iowa State University, Ames), which sponsor

2. Bruce R. Joyce, Marsha Weil, and Emily Calhoun, *Models of Teaching*, seventh edition (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2003); Robert Magnan, ed., *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Professors* (Madison, WI: Atwood, 1989); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 2000); Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997) and *To Know as We Are Known* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993); William C. Perry, *Forms of Ethical and Intellectual Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970). See also Grant P. Wiggins, *Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), and *Teaching College: Collected Readings for the New Instructor*, ed. Rose Ann Neff and Maryellen Weimer (Madison, WI: Atwood, 1998).

brilliant conferences every year with outstanding presentations in these areas, just like CAA has brilliant presentations by artists about their art and on the significance of art histories.

Pedagogy

Little: Of course, I am all for training graduate students to teach; I think it is absolutely necessary, and pedagogical training is a weakness in most graduate programs. In addition to experience and observation of techniques effectively employed in classes, I received my training largely through the kindness of my graduate advisor, Kristine Stices, who simply took the time to discuss teaching with me. I say kindness because it was not a departmental requirement and I recognized that my advisor took time from her own work even in the midst of a tenure review. Nonetheless, this training was ad hoc and informal. The question is: Who will teach the graduate students? And what will they be taught? But the truth remains that at most universities quality teachers may get teaching awards but receive little credit for teaching when evaluated for tenure. The new question might be, who will fund the teaching of graduate students, and will the academy change its value system? I would hate to see the day when we have teachers and researchers, but given the marketplace today, that seems to be the direction of higher education in the future.

Costache: The survey has remained mostly Western, with some sporadic links to other cultures, and often colleges offer a separate survey of non-Western art (this raises other important issues, too). However, the students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds are very diverse. The art used in these courses has become an almost unquestionable visual trajectory. But does this art journey make as much sense to our students as it does to us?

I start the survey with a series of questions such as: What is relevant to the process of making art? Who or what contributes to the creation, analysis, and dissemination of art? These are questions posed to students, and they have to think and respond to them. It is a dialogue, not a lecture. Surprisingly, they come up with many relevant issues related to artists' identity, technology, context, and so on. This introductory exercise shifts their attention from established masterpieces to a critical thinking process of how and why did these works become famous, why are we looking at them today.

This discussion also empowers students in looking at art with fresh eyes and gives them a sense of "ownership," making the survey more of a discovery than passive learning. It also allows them to establish meaningful connections with ideas, times, and locations they are disjointed from, by building new dialogues with their own culture, identity, and interests. It also makes art history an important resource for studies outside the arts.

An important point in this discussion is the role of reproductions in the process of teaching art history. The juxtaposition of a small Chinese sculpture next to the pyramids reveals that these comparisons are arbitrary and artificial (even though with pedagogic merit), as they can only happen in classrooms, not real life. But more important, the projected images (digital or traditional slides) share the same shape, size, brightness, surface, and environment and, to a certain

extent, these alterations and decontextualizations create similarities, which dissolve the uniqueness and identity of the artworks.

Shipps: It seems to me that in any "Introduction to Art" course, be it survey or "appreciation" (more on which in a moment), we are obligated to inform students' critical thinking about the subject by acknowledging that art itself, as we currently understand the term, is a social construct, as is its history—and at least the history construct is only a couple of hundred years old (arguably, so is the art one). I point out to them that this idea of art is purely a postindustrial one, that it wasn't (to keep it simple) until Winckelmann that the modern idea of making a history of art occurred to anybody at all (and that the historicizing of art may indeed be what finally validated it as an institution). I point out to them that once the idea of making a history of art had occurred, it fell to all those white, European males who saw merit in it to make that history, to look back down through the (white, European) ages and pick, out of all the stuff that (mostly white, mostly male) humans had ever made, some stuff that they could now designate as art, in their modern sense of the term, and weave together to make the history. All of that can lead off into vast questions of the genesis and institutionalization of human ideas at all, of course, which is why the need to keep it simple, here . . . but if we do thus deconstruct the whole art and history notions themselves, then the critical thinking can (and does) really happen . . . (and it's generalizable, too, to things beyond just art).

It is possible, too, to effectively counter the risk of existential despair, in all these undergraduates who have had their art rug pulled out from under them, by then offering them a working way of thinking about what the whole idea might actually have been. I suggest to my beginners, that is, that, rather than art being just an arbitrary social construct, maybe there's a way to think about it that explains whence/why that construct arose. It's doing this, offering a way to navigate the theoretical/conceptual edge between art as a given and art as just another idea, that I think is *so* important to *any* collegiate intro to art, if meaningful learning is to be maximized in it. (And such a working theory is readily—and concisely and accessibly—available, I hasten to add, in the rudiments of structuralism and semiotics . . . the selfsame ideas that gave rise to all the po-mo confusion about art in the first place. I assume that others can be constructed, as well.)

Irina raised a question about the difference between a survey and an art appreciation course with a chronological approach. As far as I have been aware—judging, again, from the nature of the several standard(ized) textbooks on art appreciation—the courses based on them aren't chronological, typically. They begin with (brief, notoriously clumsy) questions of definition, identify and discuss the elements of visual form, identify and discuss style(s), the various media . . . and finally, spend maybe a month or so on history (this is chronological, typically, but of course likely to be so utterly cursory as to be laughable, as compared with any term- or yearlong survey).

Concannon: I remember from my SoTAL [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning] seminar last year that most folks were looking for concrete things to take back to the classroom, and I can recall being frustrated myself at the relative dearth of material out there on SoTAL in art history. One of the many great

books we used was Barbara E. Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson's *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment.*[3] Having just worked my way through a far-too-large pile of exams—and anticipating a large pile of papers tomorrow—I'm reminded of some of the lessons about grading in the SoTAL seminar.

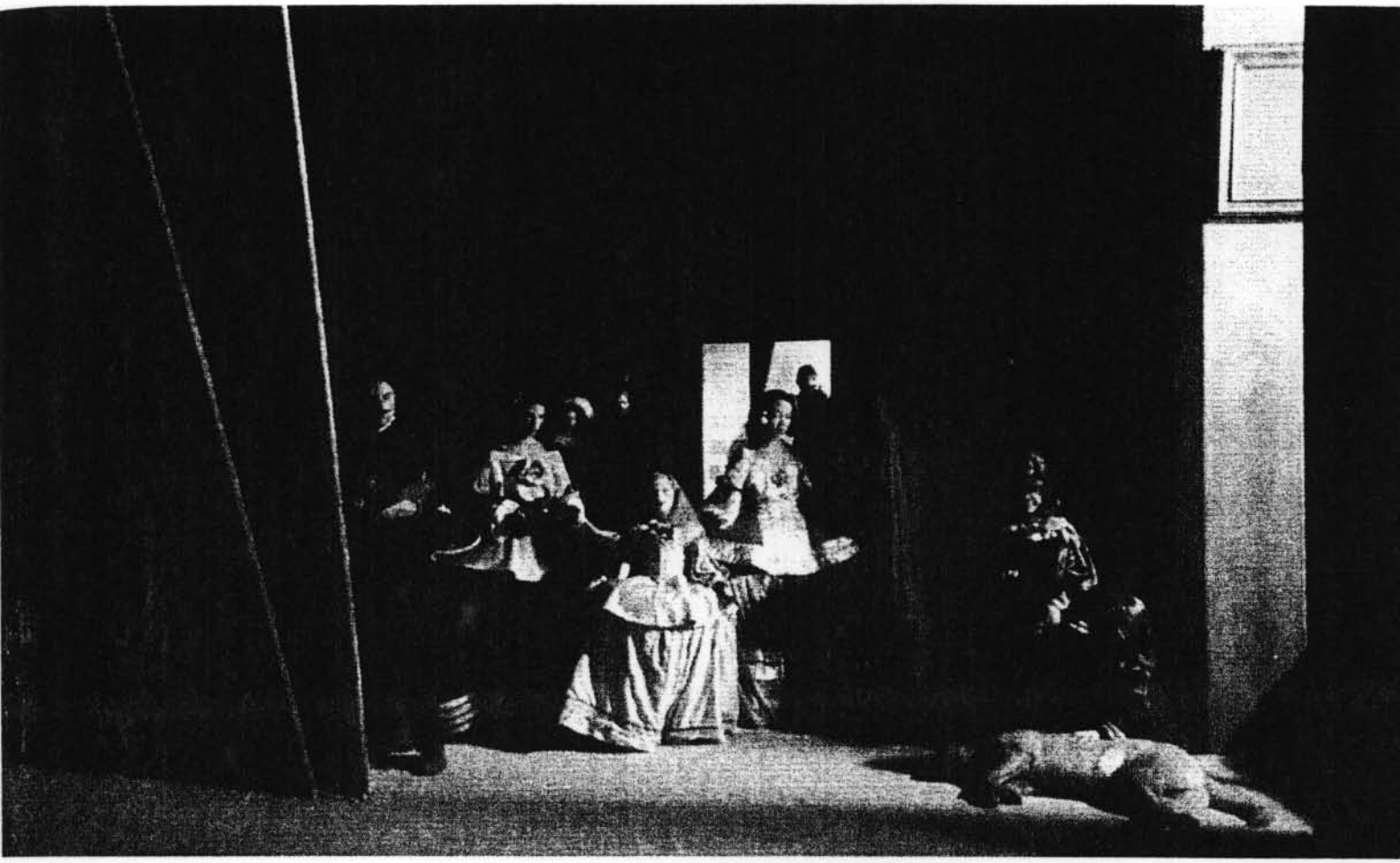
The book deals with establishing fair and understandable grading criteria that students can clearly understand. The section on primary trait analysis and rubrics is especially good. As seminar participants, we were asked to select an assignment from our focus class and develop a grading rubric. The obvious benefit of such rubrics is that they can help minimize subjective assessments based on aspects of the assignment not made clear in advance. It soon became clear that perhaps the greater benefit of providing such primary trait analysis/rubrics along with the assignment instructions is that, if well done, they can guide the student toward the desired result much more effectively. Students, as we know all too well, can focus on grades more than learning, so if you can demonstrate that the grade is based on specific criteria that are solidly linked to desired learning outcomes, you can create a grading system that is seen as fair and—more important—that promotes the desired learning outcomes and encourages optimum performance by being specific about expectations.

For their larger research paper, students had to select an object illustrated in our text and find a minimum of three scholarly articles that interpreted it from three distinct perspectives or methodologies. They had to summarize each article, describe the point of view of each writer, critique them, and offer a summary interpretation that could draw from any and all of them—or not. The handout described what was expected, the purpose of the assignment, what a scholarly journal was, how to find articles using appropriate databases (and other strategies)—and exactly how the papers would be graded. Point values were assigned to each necessary component of the paper. For each of these elements, there was a quality scale of one to three. The rubric was essentially a set of instructions describing the expected elements (and order of construction) of the paper. On the whole, the papers were excellent. It also made plagiarism rather impractical and easily detected (although one student actually ran a Google search and pasted pieces of four articles together!). Students zoomed in on the point scale to make sure they included—to the best of their abilities—all the ingredients for a good grade.

The purpose of this assignment was to help foster an appreciation for different—even conflicting—interpretations of works of art. Traditional-age first-year students, generally speaking, tend to want the (single) "correct" interpretation, and this idea that there can be multiple valid interpretations can be difficult to get across, in my experience. By running the jigsaw discussions (mentioned above) throughout the semester leading up to this assignment, the results have been extremely encouraging.

This assignment/rubric was inspired by the Walvoord and Anderson book. They actually include one art history example in their text, which I have appropriated for my own survey class: the Hypothetical Newspaper Assignment. Students are asked to play reporter (as if they were reporters at the time) and write a news story about the unveiling of a major art-historical monument. I assign Masaccio's *Holy Trinity*, providing them with background reading on culture and politics in fifteenth-century Florence, with a few tidbits about who

3. Barbara E. Walvoord and Virginia Johnson Anderson, *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).



Eve Sussman and the Rufus Corporation. Still from *89 Seconds at Alcázar* (Infanta Enters), 2004. Digital C-print. 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91.4 cm). Courtesy of Roebling Hall, New York.

might have commissioned it and why. The purpose of the assignment is to promote the value of historical understanding. (The assignment/rubric in the book—for the palace relief *Ashurnasirpal II at War*—was by Christine Havice, now at Kent State University.) The overall message of the book is that assignments and their grading are ideally based on desired learning outcomes—and that we promote them as well as measure them.

For my survey, I determined my course objectives to be: a) develop skills in formal analysis, b) develop an understanding of art within its historical context, and c) develop an appreciation for multiple interpretations and methodologies. Course activities and assignments (and grading systems) are (ideally) based on these objectives. (Rote memorization, of course, is part of the survey too. So I make PDF files available to students over WebCT that they can print out as flash cards. I encourage them to study in groups, compiling bullet points on the backs of their cards—and try to guess the compare-and-contrast problem, as well as the essay question.)

Little: Pedagogy is so important, but I am not convinced that it can be separated from content. How do we synthesize the two, and how do we frame a dialogue that allows educators with different training to discuss the possibilities of this synthesis? The teacher-or-researcher distinction is a false one, or at least not as clear-cut. The blindness of institutions in assessing faculty unfortunately feeds

this binary. Still, some of my best teachers have been great researchers; some have been lousy researchers. I think it is exciting for students of all levels to work with teachers who are both actively teaching and researching, because it allows them to learn fresh material from their teachers and see them practice their craft, in a sense. Also, as a teacher, I feel the excitement of research and discovery flows into my classes. This is not mentioning, of course, that in the field of contemporary art, you must research and keep up to date on new artwork or become a modernist.

I support the idea of more hands-on training of art history graduate students in education and teaching. But some of the greatest lessons I learned about teaching have been from teachers in the act of teaching. Fredric Jameson teaches a course on modernism that students can register for more than once during their four years because the content of the course changes from year to year. He also keeps his library open to all students. Annabel Wharton had weekly one-page response papers to readings. Valentin Mudimbe had students read short passages of texts aloud and then analyze them as a group. These have become practices that I have tried to integrate into my own teaching method, and I've added others, such as collaboratively written papers and reinterpretations of historic performances through in-class presentations. Also, as I mentioned previously, I have students write papers over the course of a semester, so I can work with them on a one-on-one basis with their writing and research approaches, and, I hope, teach the lesson of rewriting and process.

Desmond: The work of a teacher is not that different from that of a researcher or artist. But many universities don't offer courses devoted to teaching about art. While this has been done informally in the past (for example, first-year TAs only grade, while second-year TAs move on to lecturing), it is beginning to become formalized in graduate classes that address how to write a syllabus and develop objectives for learning and modes of assessment. Research universities are figuring out and foundations (Lilly, Pew, etc.) are giving grants to fund programs to teach graduate students that their roles in their new institutions will most likely be more about teaching than about contributing new research or making art.

Afterword

Peggy Phelan: In the two years between our initial meeting and the publication of this article, several developments took place that merit brief comment. *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, a new survey text written by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, four of the most influential art historians writing today, was recently published by Thames and Hudson. The seven-hundred-page book attempts to respond to recent developments in critical theory addressed throughout the discussion. It will no doubt be widely adopted as a new text for the art history survey.

More crucially, however, the two terms "art" and "history" have been given different resonances and emphases by recent international events. The notion of a vibrant avant-garde seems ever more archaic in an increasingly globalized art world, while human history itself seems ever more fragile and uncertain. Historiography presupposes a future in which historical matters will be of

urgent interest. The breathtaking scale of genocide, war, nuclear proliferation, and widely publicized torture (surely this is the first time that so much has been known about specific acts of torture and death and so little action has been taken to prevent them) has reminded us that human history is not guaranteed.

As the grim situations in Iraq and Africa unfold, perfecting pedagogy seems a somewhat romantic aspiration. This does not mean we should not embrace it, but it does require that we do so with a rigorous ethical consciousness. I hope that *Art Journal* can serve as a forum for a future discussion of these complicated dramas.

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Irina D. Costache is an associate professor of art history at the California State University Channel Islands. She is on the CAA Board of Directors (2001–2005) and is vice-president of Art Historians of Southern California. She writes on topics related to twentieth-century art and culture.

Kathleen Desmond is Byler Distinguished Faculty and professor of art at Central Missouri State University, where she teaches art history, aesthetics, and art criticism, writes about contemporary art and artists, and occasionally makes art. She was chair of the CAA Education Committee from 1999 to 2003.

David Little is director of adult and academic programs at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and teaches for the Duke University Leadership in the Arts program in New York. He is currently organizing *Person in the Crowd*, a show of contemporary art that examines displacement in urban spaces. The exhibition will be on view at the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore this fall.

Peggy Phelan is the Ann O'Day Maples Chair in the Arts and Professor of Drama at Stanford University. She wrote the survey essays for *Art and Feminism* (Phaidon, 2001) and *Pipilotti Rist* (Phaidon, 2001).

Steve Shipps was a practicing artist and commercial photographer, way back when, and has been thinking about art and its pedagogy since. He has taught studio, appreciation, and theory courses at Emerson College since 1970. He served as chair of the CAA Education Committee from 2003 to 2005.

Amy Papaelias, who selected the images that accompany this article, is a recent MFA graduate of the Visual Research Laboratory at SUNY New Paltz and the 2004–05 *Art Journal* editorial assistant. In 2001, she received her BA in cultural studies from McGill University.