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Review of Ellen Winner, (2022). *An uneasy guest in the schoolhouse: Art education from colonial times to a promising future*. Oxford University Press.

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Book Reviewed: Winner, E. (2022). *An uneasy guest in the schoolhouse: Art education from colonial times to a promising future*. Oxford University Press.

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The theme that unifies Winner's engaging book is that the arts must be recognized for their intrinsic value. Winner documents the ways in which the arts in schools have worked hard to be accepted as more than just adjuncts to the "academic" or practical disciplines. She traces this trajectory from the late 18th century to the fractious present. Warm endorsements from a number of prominent scholars in art education underline this author's special contributions to scholarship in the field.

A professor of psychology at Boston College, Winner has also long been associated with Harvard's Project Zero research group. The accolades from established and well-respected art education scholars are most noteworthy because as I recall, Project Zero (PZ) and what it stood for was not always warmly welcomed by art educators. Back in the late 1960s when PZ first appeared on the academic scene, the catchy name for the project displeased many academic art educators as it suggested that the folks at PZ saw themselves as pioneers in unknown territory, effectively ignoring the rich arts and art education research that preceded the advent of PZ. But now, to judge by the positive comments of respected art education scholars, that perception has clearly changed. Winner's authorial voice is well modulated and we know from the start where her sympathies lie. She is an impeccable scholar but never stuffy or obscurely academic. She animates her rich discussion with personal anecdotes and asides. In the space of eleven informative chapters, Winner covers more than two centuries of American art education history.

Chapters 1 and 2 discuss two contrasting models of art education: child-centered Reggio Emilia and teacher-centered Chinese art education. For Winner, these two educational perspectives establish the extreme ends of her educational spectrum. As a research associate of long standing at Project Zero, she traces the enduring influence of the Reggio Emilia approach at PZ and how PZ shares many of Reggio Emilia's foundational educational values.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of art education in America from colonial times through to the early 19th century, when the visual arts were largely handmaidens to industry. In Chapter 4, Winner elaborates on the influence of progressive educational thought in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This period saw the growing influence of important progressive educational theorists such as John Dewey and Victor Lowenfeld and later, Jerome Bruner. (For a comparison with the same period in Canadian art education, see Pearse, 2006.) Chapter 5 looks at the impact of progressive education as it affected the teaching of the (visual) arts. Winner traces the split between the "arts in education" and "aesthetic education" as championed by Sir Herbert Read and Maxine Greene respectively.

In Chapter 6, Winner identifies the huge impact of Sputnik and the ensuing “space race.” Sputnik’s effect on art teaching was to generate a reaction to the supposedly “laissez faire” approach of the Romantic/Progressive art educators. Thus, both the Getty Institute and Elliot Eisner at Stanford supported the development of Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) as a model for more rigorous art teaching. In Chapter 7, Winner deals in depth with the rise of Harvard’s Project Zero, its research agenda, and its “Arts Propel” program. This offered an alternative to DBAE. Propel emphasized studio work and above all, assessment. Chapter 8 delves into issues related to assessment and the arts. Winner sums up the contents of this chapter in a single heading: “The Struggle for Authenticity and Reliability” (p. 103). Here, Winner refers to the process of developing authentic assessment instruments and instruments that honor the *process* of art making.

Chapter 9 marks a key moment in Winner’s narrative. She describes how she and her team of researchers dared to question the often-reported claim that students who take art courses do better academically than those who do not. Winner discusses the results of a meta-analytic study that tested this claim. Commenting on the results of this research, Hetland et al. (2007) state, “We amassed no evidence that studying the arts, either as separate disciplines or infused into the academic curriculum, raises grades in academic subjects or improves performance on standardized verbal and mathematics tests” (p. 2). Upon publishing these findings, Winner was accused of “betraying” the arts and was counseled by one academic to “bury” her results! This episode is an early example of what is now a common occurrence in heated academic debates, where empirical findings that do not agree with people’s preconceptions are immediately taken as proof of the researcher’s bias—or worse. It also underscores the precarious place of the arts in the educational edifice, when it rests on such a questionable claim.

In Chapter 10, Winner gives a far better reason for supporting the arts in the schools than the argument laid to rest in Chapter 9. Winner asks, “What is it that students are *actually learning* in the art studio?” In order to answer this question, Winner and her team observed exceptional studio teachers at work. Out of this came “the eight studio habits of mind,” which are the cognitive skills that inform students’ artistic practice. Winner speculates that these habits may indeed transfer to other academic subjects, but we will need empirical research to demonstrate this.

In Chapter 11, Winner makes some predictions about art education in the 21st century. She mentions the work of several teachers who have charted new directions for art education, such as Olivia Gude (2007), who proposes “Postmodern principles” for arts education, and visual culture theorists such as Paul Duncum (2007). Winner is not

deterred by the fact that visual culture theorists have been critiqued (Efland, 2005) for flattening the distinction between “high art” and undistinguished common objects. She concludes by drawing attention to the promises of digital technology and to the possibilities of social media for making art collaboratively. In this connection she cites the exemplary work of Juan Carlos Castro (2019), who has examined the contributions of digital media to the practice of art in and out of the classroom.

How does Winner’s work reflect current discussions and issues in contemporary art education circles? The recent publication of a special issue of *Visual Inquiry, Learning and Teaching Art* (2021) functions as a useful snapshot of the concerns of contemporary art educators and suggests Winner’s place in the discussion. Dustin Garnet (2021) organized this special issue and invited art education scholars to consider the following four questions and to choose one to answer in a short essay:

1. How do you balance the concerns of postmodern perspectives in art education and more traditional approaches primarily concerned with artists, media and techniques within the pantheon of art? Is your concern primarily with the criteria of quality and technique as the paramount hallmarks of art?
2. From your perspective, what is the place of social justice education (and politics) in the art classroom? Are these topics a distraction from the disciplinary content of visual arts education – as you understand it? From your perspective, what is the disciplinary content of art education?
3. For your purposes as an art educator, how do you define ‘art’ and ‘artist’? Some critics argue that in today’s art world the ‘institutional’ definition of art reigns. What other definitions of art seem credible and useful to you as an art educator?
4. The contemporary artworld tends to blur distinctions between the fine arts and the decorative or applied arts, such as vernacular art. Do you think such distinctions have value today? (Garnet, 2021, pp. 168-169)

Of the twenty brief essays, fifteen were devoted to the issue of the place of “social justice” (Q.2) in the art classroom, and five were devoted to the definition of art (Q.3) and as to whether there might be alternatives to the “institutional” definition of art, famously advanced by Dickie (1974). So, this call for essays functions as a survey of current concerns among a representative group of senior art educators. Clearly, the key issue for many of the art educators who responded was the pressing need for social justice issues to be part of the art curriculum. The majority of respondents to (Q.2)

insisted that social justice issues should be front and center in all art lessons. A few who responded to (Q.2) (this reviewer among them, see Pariser, 2021) suggested that social justice issues would be better handled in civics and social studies classes, rather than art class. But this was decidedly a minority view. Winner's position on this question is evident. She places her emphasis on the intrinsic value of visual arts education, rather than focusing on social justice as the primary source from which all art activities and art learning must flow.

If concern for social justice—however this notoriously fluid term may be defined (van den Berg & Jeong, 2022)—is rooted in social consciousness, then the arts as understood and valued by Winner are important because one of their effects is to foster social consciousness. In her closing chapter, Winner comments on the practice of art in this century and how the arts are invariably rooted in some sort of social critique, “The 21st century approaches (to art) have much in common because they are all based in the practice of contemporary art worlds. Meaning has become more important than beauty. Art has become socially conscious.” (Winner, 2022, p.165). Winner appears to share Greene's (1977) faith in the arts as a fundamentally liberating force, one that leads to heightened and critical awareness of all aspects of the world.

It is also worth noting that Winner is optimistic about the future of the field of art education. Her optimism is reflected in her book title. This title in turn resonates well with the equally optimistic sentiments of the noted art educator Paul Bolin, who concludes his summative response to the collection of essays in the journal *Visual Inquiry*. To make his point, Bolin cites a comment he and others made in 2008:

We reside in a period when art education is being called into question. The field is buffeted about both from the inside, from art educators themselves, as well as through social and educational conditions...Does this internal and external provocation encountered by the field signal ...the initiation of a post art education world? Or does this stormy condition indicate a re-emergence of wonderings, musings and actions ...that are actually revitalizing the field? (Congden et al., 2008, p. 8)

Bolin follows the above quote by asserting that he, like Winner, believes in a bright future for art education in spite of the turmoil and controversy currently afflicting all sectors of the educational field.

Throughout, Winner is sensitive to the hot-button issues that bedevil much current discourse in the humanities (McWhorter, 2021) and the social sciences (van den Berg,

2014), for example, issues such as racism, social justice, gender, and diversity. She repeatedly acknowledges the destructive mark that racism and other social inequities have left on American education. However, I speculate that she believes that the arts, when valued and assessed for what they teach best, enable a more open, a more reflective, and ultimately a more equitable society. Winner states her credo thus:

...The arts in all their forms are a way of representing and thereby understanding our deepest experiences—love and loss, birth and death, childhood and old age, benevolence and injustice. ...It is my hope that the visual arts (and all of the arts) can give up their positions as uneasy guests in the house of education and become fully welcome, permanent residents. (Winner, 2022, p. 168)

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About the Author

David Pariser, Professor of Art Education, Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, Montreal – 1978 to the present. Doctor of Education, Harvard University, 1976. My mentors have been – Rudolf Arnheim, Frederick Erickson, Howard Gardner. I taught elementary art in Boston and rural Illinois. I was a Director of the art teacher training program at Concordia from 2005 to 2015. I have received funds from the Spencer Foundation, Social Sciences and Humanities Research on the juvenile work of great artists, and research on cross-cultural assessments of drawings. Was named a Distinguished Fellow by the National Art Education Association USA. My interests include; developmental psychology; critiques of post-positivism; the use of social media and networks for teaching art. In collaboration with Dr. Sigal Barkai (Head of the Arts Wing in the Israeli Ministry of Education) we are assembling a series of essays on historical and contemporary art education in Israel.

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